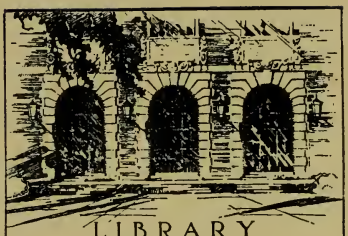

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MUCH TO BLAME,

A TALE.

BY A CELEBRATED AUTHOR.

" Lessons of wisdom have never so much power over us as when they are wrought into the heart through the ground-work of some story which interests our passions."—STERNE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MUCH TO BLAME.

CHAPTER IX.

I SHALL now go back to Lord Restormel. This young nobleman having lost his father at a very early age, was educated by his mother, a high born, proud, but pious, virtuous, intellectual woman;—her pride, however great, led in her to excellent results, for she thought it incumbent on those whom it had pleased their Creator to elevate in station above their fellow-men, not to disgrace that exalted station by vice or ignorance; she laboured, therefore, to ensure to her elder son, who was entrusted to her care, the utmost purity of morals, by giving him the soundest principles of religion, the best and surest foundation for outward conduct, and at the same time she

caused his rare talents to be cultivated to the utmost, by masters judiciously chosen for that purpose. The seed thus sown fell not on stony ground, but sprung up to a plentiful harvest; and while her younger son, who had been adopted by a weak and profligate uncle, became notorious for his idleness and his vices, Lord Restormel was the pride of his preceptors, the happiness of his mother, and the blessing of his neighbourhood. His brother meanwhile, regardless as such a man was likely to be of the principles and manners of the woman he married, chose for his wife the beautiful and notoriously indiscreet daughter of a beautiful and notoriously frail mother, who soon forsook him for another man, and before the passion was over which her loveliness had excited. The consequence was, that not contented with the usual reparation afforded him by the law, he took revenge into his own hands, followed the offending parties abroad, and forced his rival to meet him in a duel; the result of which was fatal to himself only, and Lady Res-

tormel mourned over him as the victim not only of his own rashness and ungovernable passions, but also of the error of his choice in marriage. Deeply, therefore, did she endeavour to impress on the mind of her only surviving child the necessity of preferring to every other charm or quality in woman, sound principles of piety and virtue, exhibiting themselves in a strict outward attention to the dictates of decorum, and a quiet sobriety of manner, which seemed to avoid rather than to court observation; and while she exhibited in her own person and conduct a model of feminine propriety and graceful dignity, which at once gratified the taste, and satisfied the judgment of Lord Restormel; he could with a safe conscience assure his mother that he believed himself incapable of selecting a woman for his wife, who did not in all essentials at least resemble her;—nor had his heart rebelled against his judgment, or suffered itself to be impressed at all by the witchery of female loveliness, when during his travels abroad he became intimately

acquainted with Captain Fortescue, and heard him descant on the charms, the talents, and the character of Lady Helena. Fortescue was not blind to the defects of his sister, or the rigid ideas of his friend on the subject of female conduct; still he could not help owning to Lord Restormel his earnest desire to introduce him to his sister, and to see him united to her, accompanied by an assurance, that a nature, generous and impressible as her's was, would be easily moulded to the pleasure and opinions of a husband; and that Lady Helena, if her heart was once his, could soon be fashioned into all that he approved.

"But suppose that, on being introduced to her, I should lose my heart in defiance of my judgment, and not be able to obtain her's in return?"

"But that is an impossible supposition —you must charm any woman whom you wish to charm."

"I thank you for your flattery, but it cannot overcome my caution; I would

rather not know Lady Helena Fortescue, as I am very sure that, admirable as she is, she would not satisfy my mother's judgment, though she might hoodwink mine—and I never will marry to give pain to the parent to whom I owe so much."

Fortescue was mortified, and pride forbade him to renew the subject; but he continued to shew his friend Lady Helena's letters, and Lord Restormel soon became interested in the arrival of the post from England, for whatever she herself might be, Lady Helena's letters were all the heart and the mind could desire, and displayed a precocity of intellect, a shrewdness of observation, and a playful wit, which made her a desirable correspondent to any one. This conviction of her powers, however, made him more resolved against accompanying his friend to Laurel Grove, especially as Lady Restormel had said—

"What a strange, forward, eccentric, self-willed girl is that Lady Helena Fortescue; her weak grand-mother, Lady Stanmore, with whom she has always

lived has quite ruined her; I never saw her, indeed, but from what I hear of her, I would not on any account renew my early acquaintance with her mother."

Lord Restormel made no reply, though he earnestly wished to say something in palliation of this harsh censure, and to hint that a girl of extraordinary talents might excite envy, and be liable to misrepresentation; but he knew his mother would observe that she hated extraordinary talents in woman, and he did not desire to increase her dislike to the sister of his friend; still he was mortified to find how much his mother's severe expressions concerning Lady Helena had wounded him, and how much her evident intention in making these observations had increased his wish to see, and know Lady Helena—reminding him perhaps of the couplet in the fable.

"I ne'er had been in this condition,
"But for my mother's prohibition."

That year Lady Restormel went to Leamington, where Lady Stanmore and

Lady Helena had recently been, and she heard of nothing but the latters eccentric daring, and what she termed indecorous exhibitions. At a sort of public private masquerade given at the rooms, Lady Helena, though only fifteen, had personated several characters and filled them all to the life; nay one of them was a man's character, and her indelicacy in exposing her person in men's clothes, filled Lady Restormel with horror and indignation! But poor Lady Helena in that case suffered from the misrepresentations of the gossiping and the inaccurate—and perhaps of the malignant; her character was that of a man, but not her dress, for she had represented an astrologer—and under his flowing robes, she had worn her usual habiliments —but having used to the utmost the privilege of a mask, she had not spared the vices or follies of those whom she knew, and had therefore laid herself open to all the malicious animadversions that mortified self-love could dictate. She had also gone about at night in disguise with a hurdy-

gurdy and a mandoline, accompanied by her cousin, Miss Notherby, and a young lady who sang excessively well, and they had, while unknown, gained large contributions from the passers-by, or those under whose windows they performed;—but though the money so gained was sent, according to its original destination, to a poor widow, left with a large and starving family, the daring manner in which it had been obtained, and the notoriety which it gave to the young ladies, insured to them censure, rather than respect, as vanity the love of singularity, and a contempt for decorum were supposed to be the prompter of their exertions, not the benevolent wish to assist distressed fellow-creatures. Such was the judgment which Lady Restormel passed on their conduct—but perhaps she would have been more candid towards Lady Helena, had she not early imbibed a terror lest her son should know and admire her, as her own talents and powers of mind had taught him to value mental superiority in a woman, and she

knew that in Lady Helena Fortescue the sister of his new but intimate friend Captain Fortescue, they were united to excelling loveliness. The next year she was at Malvern just after Lady Helena and her grand-mother had quitted it, and at first her terror-motived dislike of the former had nothing to feed it, for she heard only of her attention to her sick parent and of her charity to the poor; but from some families who had smarted under the lash of Lady Helena's wit, and with whom on her first coming Lady Restormel had made no acquaintance, she soon heard sufficient to gratify her spiteful feelings towards the beautiful offender.

"Yes! Lady Helena, and her cousin had ridden a race together. They had staked their ponies against each other, and ridden them themselves in jockey caps and dresses!—nay, in complete *man's attire*, and *as men ride* according to the report of some, and also on a public race-ground! but even Lady Restormel refused to believe the former representation, though

she gave implicit credit to the latter. But the account was nearly all false; it was true that the young ladies, on an appointed day, rode their own ponies against each other, but it was on side-saddle and in habits, though they did wear different coloured jockey caps; and the scene of their performance was not in a public race-ground, but the park of a mutual friend, where no one was admitted but the acquaintance of both parties. These stories, with many additions, were told to Lady Restormel, and by her repeated to her son when he joined her at Malvern, and it was with indignation that she heard him reply—

"But, remember, dear madam, she is only sixteen!"

"But if she is so fearless and daring at sixteen, what will she be at one and twenty my lord?"

He could have said, sobered, and improved, perhaps, but he forbore, and he even renewed his promise never to accept any invitation to Laurel Grove.

About a year after, and when Lady Helena, having lost her grandmother, had taken up her abode with her parents, Lord Restormel was induced to go to Drury Lane Theatre, to see Kean in one of his best characters; and though Lady Restormel was in a private box, he chose to go into the pit, because the box was too high for him to see all the varying expression of the actor's countenance; for some time his attention was fixed on the performance, but at length it was attracted to a young lady in the stage-box, whose audible though instantly suppressed sob struck upon his ear, and by that means caused his eye to dwell, with a degree of fascination, on a face and form of most uncommon loveliness; her eyes were, meanwhile, rivetted on the scene, and she seemed wholly absorbed in what was going forward, while her expressive countenance formed a marked and correct comment on all that was passing before her, for her cheek was now pale with anxiety—now flushed with indignation;—her lip varied in

its beautiful *contour*, with all the variety of the passions represented, and her dark eye was now suddenly dimmed with tears, or flashing with anger or delight. Lord Restormel could scarcely help smiling at his own enthusiasm, while, as he gazed on her, he said to himself, why should I look at the stage?—I see all that is passing there, reflected in that countenance; and some minutes elapsed, before he also said to himself, but should I like a sister of mine to be so wholly abandoned to her feelings, so wholly regardless of observer's eyes? However, he did say so at *last*, and he resolved to look wholly on the stage in future; but when the act ended, the fulfilment of his wise resolution was deferred, as for want of something else to look at, he was forced to continue to observe this young lady. He fancied her some years older than she was, for she was not quite seventeen, but she looked twenty, from the strong marks of intellect, and the already decided character visible in her countenance; her cheek too was rather pale than

blooming, and except when emotion mantled her ever-varying complexion, the deep vermilion of her lip entirely eclipsed the delicate tints of her cheek; the shape of her head, and her bust, appeared to him the most perfect he had ever seen, and the whiteness of her skin was set off by the simple black gown which she wore; and when she rose he saw that she united the most finished grace of motion to beauty of person. He now found that her countenance was as fascinating in mirth as it had been in anxiety—in smiles as it had been in tears—for she was surrounded by men of various ages, and the eye was now beaming with laughter, which had lately been suffused with sorrow; he also saw that the scarlet shawl was now drawn—now withdrawn from the exposed and ivory shoulder, with, as he feared, coquetish art, and that this gifted creature knew that she was the observed of all beholders, and enjoyed the consciousness. Lord Restormel sighed while he saw this, and wished the curtain would draw up again;

it did so, but his attention still wandered from the stage, though the object of it kept her's again fixed on the performance.

At length came the catastrophe, and her face hidden in her handkerchief, her heaving bosom, and a sort of faintly murmured sobbing expressed her deep sense of the author's—the actor's merit. What! no self-control!—none at all, thought he; poor thing! how her education has been neglected! Had my mother brought her up, she might have been a paragon: poor thing! he repeated again and again, and each time he became more deeply absorbed in gazing on her. But now she was again surrounded, and 'her dark eye smiling through forgotten tears,' she seemed to deal out repartee on repartee to some men, who, though men of fashion, he knew to be unworthy of the notice of any delicate woman.

The farce now begun, and Lord Restormel staid on, though he did not originally intend to do so; but he knew Lady

Restormel did not need his attendance, and he could not conceal from himself that he wished to see the last of the young lady; but she certainly did not gain further on his admiration, by her behaviour during the after-piece, for her laughter was as loud as her grief had been, and called the attention of the house to her box. To express mirth thus loudly, though it was in the sweetest tone possible, was more indelicate, he thought, than to express sorrow; and again, he regretted the bad manner in which the poor thing had been educated; nay, he began to wonder whether his mother had observed her and her behaviour. As this passed his mind, he looked up at her box, and saw her leaning over, and trying, he thought, to discover him. At this moment their eyes met, and Lady Restormel beckoned to him accordingly, with a farewell glance at the incognita, whose features were now still, and whose fine countenance was beaming with intellect and thought;

he left the pit, and proceeded to his mother's box. The instant she saw him, she exclaimed—"Oh, Restormel! did you observe that girl in the stage-box?"

"To be sure I did," he replied, blushing as he spoke, for he knew that he could have added, I scarcely observed any thing else.

"Well, but do you know who it is?"

"No; but I mean to enquire, for she is very beautiful."

"Beautiful! she beautiful!" replied Lady Restormel, changing colour, "well you have mortified me, I thought your sober judgment would have been as disgusted with her as I have been—a forward, fine-eyed, actress-like girl, dressed for effect, and evidently manœuvring to divide the attention of the audience with the actors—and to call *her* beautiful!"

"Beautiful she is in person and face, however defective in manner, for I saw her very near."

"Near, very near Restormel!—well,

but you own you did not like her manner; and to think that forward, assured looking miss is not yet seventeen!"

"I took her for twenty; but who is she?"

"The very girl I have so often talked of—Lady Helena Fortescue."

Lord Restormel at this name felt a strange sensation come over him, and with difficulty he faltered out—"Indeed! that Lady Helena Fortescue!"

"Yes, that is she; and then, for a girl of rank to be in an open box, as if she wished to be as much seen as possible; I really am quite sorry to think so respectable and high-bred a lady, as my old friend, should have a daughter so unworthy of her."

"Surely, surely, dearest mother," said Lord Restormel, in spite of himself, "you judge this young lady rather hastily, not to say severely."

"Restormel!" cried she, laying her hand on his arm, and lowering her tone still more, for she had spoken from the

beginning so as not to be heard by her companions, "do not let me hear you defend Lady Helena Fortescue; I know your intimacy with her brother, and—but no—I know you, Restormel, and I cannot distrust either your prudence or your judgment."

Restormel bowed, as if in submission, but he was not satisfied either with his mother or himself; however, he even was more resolved than before not to venture to Laurel Grove, and he was also resolved he would not let Fortescue know that he had seen, admired, but disapproved his sister.

Not long after, Lord Restormel went first to Ireland, then to France, and was at Lyons, on his way to England, when he received a letter there from Fortescue, telling him that he hoped he could now claim his congratulations for having at length escaped, and for ever, from the chains which he, Lord Restormel, had always considered as unworthy of him, and that he was on the eve of making proposals to a most admirable girl, whom

even his rigid judgment would approve; and then requested him to bring over some pieces of Lyon's silk, as presents for his mistress, his mother, and his sister. But the next post brought a letter from Lord Erpingham, describing the effect which the sudden appearance of Mrs. Tyrawley had had on his son, and adding, that Lady Helena was sure that Mansfeldt, who had taken an aversion to Miss Villeroy, because she had once reproved his impertinences, had thrown Mrs. Tyrawley in Fortescue's way, on purpose to prevent the match; as it was likely that his observant eye had discovered the partiality with which Miss Villeroy, whose life his son had once preserved, had long regarded him. The earl wrote, he said, to beg that Lord Restormel would immediately hasten to England, and be with Captain Fortescue as much as possible, since no one had such power over him as he had. He concluded, he said, that he was in London, but had not heard from him since he left home so abruptly in such an agony of mind.

On receipt of this letter Lord Restormel hastened to Dieppe; and it was that he might get to England for Fortescue's sake as soon as possible, that he embarked in so rash and desperate a way. When he landed at Bognor he sent a messenger to ask for any letters at Brighton, directed to Lord Restormel, and found one from Fortescue, announcing his instant departure for Paris, and his hope to see him there; accordingly Lord Restormel having written to his mother as soon as he had landed, to desire his carriage to meet him at such a place on the road, made the best of his way thither, on or in coaches, as it was his custom to travel in that manner, because he loved to see life and character, and delighted in the variety which this mode of travelling afforded to the often monotonous state in which he was forced to live with Lady Restormel. That lady was far from approving the occasional laying down of his rank and its accompaniments; but she always insisted that when he did emerge from his obscurity, it should be into the

fullness of his glory; she therefore uniformly chose to send his usual equipage for him, with the coronet, the liveries, and the two servants; while on the journey in which he met Lady Helena, he resolved, after passing a few days with his mother, to join Fortescue at Paris, and he was thinking very intently on his friend, his blighted prospects, and the fatal consequences of forming an attachment to an unworthy object, when he was roused from the attitude resembling sleep, by the stopping of the coach to admit Lady Helena. The moment he saw her he recognised her, though he chose to resume his attitude, and seem to sleep. He was soon an attentive listener to all that passed, and had no difficulty in convincing himself that the young lady next him, who had been desired, he found, by her parents to travel as he saw her, but whom Lady Helena rejoined unknown to her's, at the suggestions of her own eccentric will, was the Miss Villeroy whose prospects had been blasted probably by the vindictive artifice of a man

whom he dispised. Chance had thus thrown him into the presence of one woman, whom on principle he wished the most to avoid, and of another whom he most wished to see—while his judgment impelled him from the one and his compassion and curiosity urged him to stay with the other. Therefore, though at first he resolved to leave the coach, as Lady Helena was become an inmate of it, he satisfied his conscience for rescinding this resolution, by saying within himself, "I ought to stay to protect this strangely exposed Miss Villeroy; her friend needs no protection, and deserves whatever disagreeable situations her folly may expose her to." He did not at first intend to be himself her chastiser, and by his own behaviour shew the unfitness of her conduct, but meant to be a quiet listener and observer of what passed. To remain so, however, was impossible. Lady Helena forced him into the arena, and for her sake he saw it was necessary for him not to let her retire unwounded from the combat: but for his

own he had better have remained inactive. He had the heart to wound her, but not to see her suffer under the pain he inflicted, without feeling pity of a most dangerous nature—pity to which an equally dangerous sensation of self-reproach was united, for what right thought he have I to wound the feeling of this amiable, though rash and ill-educated girl? Therefore, whatever Lady Helena's distress of mind might be from the consequences of her ill-advised journey, Lord Restormel's bore some degree of comparison with it, and while wrapped in painful contemplation he journeyed towards his home, he caught himself frequently exclaiming in the secret recesses of his heart—"Thank heaven! my mother can never know of this rencontre, nor the impropriety of conduct which occasioned it!" Yet, why should I, hitherto open and ingenuous in my dealings with every one, and particularly so to my mother, why should I now not only wish to conceal the adventures of to-day from her, but feel an utter impossibility to disclose them?

The reason was he thought obvious—it was two-fold. In the first place, he had no right to disclose to any one a secret which he had only surprised, and ought, therefore, to respect Lady Helena's intended incognita; in the next place, it would, he felt, be cruel and ungenerous in him to mention to Lady Restormel a circumstance which could not fail to draw down on her head the severe but just censure of that unindulgent judge.

Accordingly, when he reached Green Hills, his mind was made up to the necessity of concealing his adventures in the stage-coach; and Lady Restormel was too much engaged by the delight of seeing him again in safety and unhurt after his perils at sea, on which he dwelt more than he would otherwise have done, to turn her attention from his unusual abstraction, to put questions to him on his comparatively uninteresting proceedings by land.

The next morning, however, he did not escape without some trials, both to his feelings and ingenuousness. He received

by the post of that day a letter from Fortescue, dated London, when he expected that he was at Paris. In this letter he said he had met Lord Aston on the road, he being sufficiently recovered to proceed to England, by slow stages; and that his brother was already on his way to Laurel Grove, but that he was detained in London by business, and earnestly wished to see Lord Restormel there.

As he read this letter aloud, it gave Lady Restormel an opportunity of exclaiming—"What a strange, capricious young man! you told me last night that he had requested you to meet him at Paris, and he is now flown back to London; I doubt he is an unsteady character, Restormel!—Poor, dear Lady Erpingham! with an elder son in bad health, and such a daughter, and such a younger son, she is really much to be pitied!"

"I doubt much whether Lady Erpingham considers herself as an object of pity," he replied, deeply blushing, "and the world, in general, looks upon her, no

doubt, as a very enviable mother:—Fortescue's unfortunate attachment is not known to every one."

"You do not mean to say, I hope, that he is still attached to that woman, who is now another man's wife?"

"I mean that the consequences of that attachment subsist still, namely, an impossibility to love and marry any other woman."

"What imbecility of mind!—what a want of energy of character!—well, Restormel, Lady Erpingham is more to be pitied than I thought she was: I hope you will not be prevailed upon by Captain Fortescue to accompany him to Laurel Grove?"

"No, madam; I give you my word of honor that I will not."

"That is enough; Lady Helena Fortescue is there, I conclude?"

"No; I believe she is not there now."

"How should you know that?—does her brother mention her in his letters to you?"

"Sometimes; and Lady Helena is, probably, now in London."

"In London!—and shall you see her?"

"I dare say not, for she is in all probability at Sir George Villeroy's—and—and—"

"Why do you hesitate?"

"Nay, it was unnecessary, as I may venture to tell you that Fortescue has been talked of for Miss Villeroy, and that circumstances make it nearly impossible he should visit his sister; therefore, it is equally impossible that I should make Lady Helena's acquaintance."

"I am glad of it—she looks artful—and your poor brother's fate, and Captain Fortescue's, have given me a distrust of female artifice, and sorry should I be to see you, my dear Charles, exposed to a struggle between your affections and your principles."

"Not more sorry than I should be," replied Restormel, sighing involuntarily;

" and I can readily believe, though I do not think she looks artful, that Lady Helena Fortescue is not to be approached with impunity; therefore, I shall avoid, rather than seek her acquaintance; and I will refuse to be presented to her if I can do so without pointed rudeness."

Lady Restormel expressed herself satisfied with this assurance, and tried to be so, but she was not; she saw that her son had been greatly struck with the personal graces of Lady Helena, and she was by no means sure that that man was not already under the power of the woman whom he felt it prudent to avoid; and how her fears would have been increased, had she known he had already seen her, and had concealed the meeting from her! but she could do no more—she had warned him: but never did mother more earnestly desire a husband for the eldest of her eight girls, than Lady Restormel for this dangerous daughter of the house of Fortescue, though not of her own providing.

We left Lady Helena and Julia at the door of Sir George Villeroy's house, and *there* the former chose to remain, till Julia had announced her unexpected arrival; but it was some minutes before she could announce it, as she was so overpowered at sight of the alarming change in her father's appearance since she saw him last, that she could only weep, and return in silence the tearful caresses which he bestowed on her. It was unnecessary, however, for in the midst of this ebullition of parental and filial feelings, Lady Villeroy not liking to witness it, went to the window and saw Lady Helena.

"Why, Julia," cried she, and in no pleasant tone of voice, "what does this mean, and why have you brought Lady Helena with you?—to be sure she is not come to stay?"

"I am sure I hope she is," answered Sir George—"I shall delight to have my old friend's child under my roof before I die, for their going to a hotel, when last here, preyed upon me sadly."

"Stuff!" muttered Lady Villeroy, "but speak, girl!—let me know the worst."

Sir George, meanwhile, was hobbling down to invite Lady Helena in, and assist her from the carriage, and her affectionate heart was shocked to see how ill he looked.

"Dear, Sir George," cried she, springing out, "how kind this is! then Lady Villeroy and you will admit me!"

"Admit you! to our home and our hearts; why did you stay at the door for a moment? but how did you come?—not in that vile machine to be sure?"

"Oh, yes I did."

"What! did Lord and Lady Erpingham allow their daughter to travel in a stage coach?—Impossible! nor would I have allowed mine, if— but I must not think that way, or I shall misbehave; but do explain."

"What! has not Julia told you every thing?"

"No, poor thing! she has not spoken yet," he replied, his voice faltering as he

said it, " and you might have been at the door till now, had not Lady Villeroy seen you."

Lady Villeroy now advanced coldly and stiffly to meet Lady Helena, saying, " This was an honor I did not expect."

" But not the less welcome," said Sir George, " and it was kind in you so to come."

" No, no," replied Lady Helena, with gentleness, as she was resolved to be very good, " it was not kind, because I am here, *malgre moi*."

She then explained the causes and motives of her enforced visit to Gloucester Place, and Sir George thanked her again and again for having chosen to share the enforced degradation of Julia. Lady Helena then assured Lady Villeroy that she could take part of Julia's bed, and that as Mrs. Seebright was absent, the naughty girl would go back to papa and mamma as soon as her maid should arrive in London.

"Your maid! is she coming?" asked Lady Villeroy.

"Yes, and man too, I hope," cried Sir George; and, I assure you, the best bed is up again, and shall not be taken down again while I live," he added, nodding significantly as he spoke.

"You are always harping on that string, Sir George," cried Lady Villeroy, "but I will appeal to Lady Helena, whether she does not think that, ill as you are, it is better not to be tempted to have staying company, and therefore the fewer beds the better."

"My dear madam," replied Lady Helena, but keeping under, with laudable resolution, her inclination to be saucy, in her reply to this indelicate speech, "you are a better judge than I, or any one can be, of Sir George's ability to bear company, and your plans are probably, therefore, founded on experience; consequently, I hold myself ready to go away directly, and return to my friend's empty house, if it so pleases you."

"Oh! dear, no! not on any account," cried Lady Villeroy, subdued by her unexpected courtesy, while Sir George seized her by the arm lest she should escape. In a few minutes the necessary directions were given; Lady Helena was installed in the best chamber, having privately desired her servant to provide himself with a lodging at the nearest hotel, and poor Sir George, as the coffee was carried round, declared that he believed the return of Julia, and the visit of Lady Helena would lengthen his life some years. But if Julia was struck at the alteration in her father's appearance, he was no less shocked at that in her's; her cheek had lost its bloom and its fulness, and he feared that Captain Fortescue's attentions, as they had meant nothing, might have been fatal to her peace; still she was grown more beautiful than he had ever expected, and he wondered what was become of her high shoulders and narrow chest; then her dress, what elegant simplicity! no bed-curtain

gown disfigured her now; and while he surveyed her becoming apparel with approving delight, Lady Villeroy was eyeing it askance, and trembling to think what a bill would be sent in from Lady Helena's milliner! It was no wonder that Lady Villeroy became more than usually eloquent on the distresses of the times, and the necessity for the strictest economy; at another time Lady Helena would not have been able to resist this temptation to play on the feelings of Lady Villeroy, and work up her avaricious fears to agony, but mortification and conscious error had stolen her usual spirits, and when they had retired for the night, Lady Villeroy owned to Sir George, that she never saw a girl so improved as Lady Helena.

"Yes, one still more so," he replied.

"Whom?"

"My own dear Julia!—do you not think so?"

"She is very well," said Lady Villeroy, unable to bear to own the improvement of

which she was equally conscious, especially to Sir George, of whose exclusive attachment she was still tenacious.

"Very well!—only very well!—I tell you, she looks like an angel, and like one who is all angel already too!" Here he heaved a deep sigh, and she who was not all angel now, nor even yet in a way to be so, felt that she would have spared herself the present mortification had she been more generous.

CHAP. X.

The next morning brought a letter for Lady Helena from Laurel Grove, and dreading the reproof which she deserved, she trembled to open it, especially before strangers; she therefore withdrew with Julia to her own room. It was, however, some relief to her feelings to see that the hand-writing was that of her indulgent mother; but when she read—'Your father is so highly irritated against you that he dare not trust himself to write, and has therefore given up the pen to me.' She could scarcely read what followed, for she was almost blinded with tears. 'He desires me to say that your disobedience and assumption of independence in leaving home without leave, and in so offensive and improper a manner, and your rudeness in doing so when old and respected friends

were our guests, will, however, be punished when you learn, that our dear and suffering Aston is arrived at Laurel Grove to be nursed into health by his mother and sister again if possible—that sister who—' Here Lady Helena threw down the letter, unable to read any more, her father's anger, her brother's illness, and her absence at the moment of the beloved invalid's return, were too much for her already agitated spirits, and it was some time before Julia's gentle soothings could restore her to composure.

" But what of my return!" she suddenly exclaimed, snatching up the letter. ' I need not tell you Aston's disappointment at not seeing you,—he must have passed you on the road. I would have sent off an express for you immediately, but your father would not suffer me, he said the post would reach you time enough—and he desired I would respect your assumed independence of the duties, and tell you he did not presume to wish you to come till it was your pleasure so to do.' Here she was again over-

whelmed. 'But my dear child, I speak differently for myself; I know you do not wish to be independent of your duties, and I say, Come! come directly! your mother's arms are open to receive you, and so are Aston's! and when your father sees the truant's dear face again, and a tearful face too it will be I know Helena, all will be forgotten and forgiven!'"

"That is so like my dear, dear indulgent mother!" sobbing as she spoke, "but, what is next?" 'Oh, Gibbs will not reach London till hours after you receive this; therefore, you cannot set off till the next day: I conclude you will keep John to attend you, but that will be unnecessary if Marcus, who is staying in London on business, and is at his old quarters in Vere-street, accompanies you back.'

"Marcus in London!" exclaimed Lady Helena—"did you hear that Julia?"

"I did," she replied, turning pale as death, while a sort of convulsive emotion passed across her face; but she soon recovered herself, and was able to say,

" what else does dear Aunt Erpingham tell you ?"

" Why she advises me to conceal from Marcus my clandestine departure, and the way in which I travelled, lest he should blame me! *I* stoop to conceal an action lest it should procure me blame ! No, little does she know me! I have deserved censure, and I court it as a just and salutary penance for my fault: *I* shrink from the reproaches of Marcus ! no indeed—I can even exist under my own, and dread them much more ; besides, I shall not see him, he would not like I should go to the hotel, and I cannot ask him hither you know."

" And why not; do you suppose I shall dislike to see Captain Fortescue ?"

" That is not the question, but, whether it is proper that you should see him, and he visit here."

" And why should he not ?"

" Because I think he has not used you well, and your father may be of the same opinion."

" I can never admit that he used me

ill; he never said he loved me, though it was evident that he thought he did, and he must have more than suspected that I loved him; but as soon as he found that he had deceived himself, he took care to deceive me no longer; therefore, my way is clear before me, and so says Miss Brightwen in her last precious letter. It is a duty I owe myself to behave now as if Captain Fortescue had never been any thing to me but a friend, and as if I felt for him nothing but friendship; under the present circumstances, female pride and delicacy enjoin me not only to endeavour to subdue my feelings, but to act as if they were subdued.

"And can you do this? and is not this, (a lesson evidently learnt by heart I see, and taught by that Christian philosopher Sophia Brightwen) however proper in theory, impossible in practice?"

"I humbly trust not," replied Julia, lifting her tearful eyes to heaven, "I have now been studying it for many days as I know the time must come when I must

see Captain Fortescue again, and I believe that I shall be able to meet the trial with firmness."

"You are an admirable creature, Julia," cried Lady Helena, embracing her, "and I wonder with the man in the stage coach, I cannot bear to name him! that any man could have the heart to wound you! Well, then, if Sir George does not forbid, I may invite Marcus hither, may I?"

"Yes, I will ask papa to invite him; and the sooner I do so the better."

Accordingly she went to his study, and with a tolerably firm voice she told Sir George that Captain Fortescue was in London, and that she hoped he would invite him to come and see his sister.

"His sister! and only his sister! but how is this, Julia, did he not pay you particular attention?"

"Yes, but he did not use me ill; and I shall see him with pleasure, and I trust without emotion now. If you do not ask him you know he will have reason to believe that you are angry, and that I am

love-sick, papa, and he must not be allowed to think either the one or the other!"

"Dear, wise, forgiving girl! why, Julia, how you talk, like a little Solomon! well, my dear, do as you please—write to him if you will, and ask him to dinner!"

Here Lady Villeroy, who had just entered, cast no very kind glance on the little Solomon, and exclaimed—

"Pray whom are you going to ask to dinner? No one with my consent."

"But, my dear, it is only Captain Fortescue."

"He, of all people! how indelicate it would look, as if you wanted to force your daughter upon him, and as if she wanted it too."

"It is not my wish that he should dine here, madam," replied Julia, coldly, "I only want that he should be told he may call here on Lady Helena."

"Well, that may do for the present; but mark me, Lady Villeroy, dine here he shall one day, and have a dinner fit to eat too!"

Julia now authorized Lady Helena to write to her brother, and she appointed him to call that morning. Never was surprise greater than Fortescue's when he received the note, and found his sister was in London; and never had he felt more embarrassed, than when he saw where she was. How could he dare to present himself before Julia; however, she probably would not appear; yet, that was not likely, for his sister said Julia desires me tell you Sir George hopes you will call on me, and that he shall be well enough to see you.

"What shall I do, Restormel," said he to his friend, who was with him, and had marked his varying countenance?

"Go, to be sure."

"But I dread going; the sight of Julia, and the recollections of my feelings when I saw her last, before that destroying angel came across my path, will upset all my recovered composure."

"Then you own that Miss Villeroy is not an object of indifference to you?"

"Certainly not; and I thought I loved her till—— Restormel, you must go with me, and then I shall be less embarrassed; indeed, you must go, besides, I want to present you to Helena, whom you never saw, you know; and I also want to hear your opinion of Julia· she is exactly the girl to please Lady Restormel."

"And I suspect her son too."

"Do you say so, then I had better go without you perhaps?"

"Much better; no, I cannot accompany you," said Lord Restormel, with emotion.

"Are you afraid of falling in love with Julia, because she is dear to me?"

"No, not at all."

"Then it is Helena whom you fear! I see how it is, you are prejudiced against her, and I as her brother feel offended, my lord; she is my sister, and you ought not to allow yourself to believe ought against her on the report of others. I have heard that Lady Restormel is not very candid in her strictures on Helena; but do as you

please, sir—I would not force my sister, Lady Helena Fortescue, on the notice of a prince!"

"Nor shall you force her on mine, Marcus. I will willingly accompany you to Gloucester Place, after what you have said, I should not be easy to do otherwise."

"When shall we go? I cannot go till to-morrow, though they wish me to call to-day, but I shall write, and say I will be at Sir George's punctually at twelve."

"Be it so, and I will be here in time."

It was well, perhaps, for Julia that she received a letter from Miss Brightwen by that day's post, breathing her usual strain of pious instruction, and renewing her advice to Julia how she was to behave in case of her again being thrown in the way of Captain Fortescue. But a letter which she received from Sophia the next day was equally efficacious in preparing her for the dreaded interview, by overwhelming her with a grief so severe and well founded, that

every other pain faded before it; Julia learnt by this letter that Lady Villeroy had written to inform her she was not to return to Gloucester Place, as Miss Villeroy had no further occasion for her services. This was a trial indeed! and one which she had not expected, though Lady Villeroy had darkly hinted at it, and declared, that, such was the badness of the times, they should be obliged to curtail their expenses. While weeping over this letter, Julia forgot even the approaching visit of Captain Fortescue, nor did his arrival when announced, call forth in her any of those emotions which she had feared to feel.

"I cannot come down to him yet," said she, as Lady Helena left the room, "but do not fear for me! I am firm, and when I have done weeping I will make my appearance."

Little did Lady Helena expect, when she entered the drawing-room, the surprise that awaited her. Fortescue had purposely omitted to inform her that he

should be accompanied by the man whom she had always declared herself so desirous to behold. Lord Restormel, meanwhile, awaited her entrance with a degree of flutter at his heart, which it would have gratified her wounded feelings to be assured of: he had resolved to receive her as a perfect stranger, and to leave it to her to acknowledge him as an acquaintance or not, according as her pride or other feelings might dictate—when the door opened, and Marcus said in a tone of evident relief, for she was not accompanied by Julia—"Oh! here is Helena!" Lord Restormel was looking out of the window, nor did he turn round, till Fortescue said, "Now, Helena, let me present my dearest friend to you—Lord Restormel! Lady Helena Fortescue!" He then drew near, bowing most respectfully and distantly, and though he raised his eyes to her blushing face, it was without one look of recognition.

"Lord Restormel and I have met before," said Lady Helena, assuming the

utmost dignity, though trembling with emotion and surprise; "nor can I flatter myself that he has forgotten our meeting, though he has been so considerate as not to name it to my brother."

"How is this?—how strange it was in you, my lord, not to tell me you knew Helena; it is impossible you should have met her where she ought not to be seen."

"*Ne gagez pas*," replied Lady Helena, while Lord Restormel looked more and more embarrassed; "Lord Restormel will not say so, and I own that his silence on the subject of our meeting, while I feel the kindness of it, mortifies me to the quick." Here, spite of herself, tears rushed into her eyes, while Lord Restormel vainly endeavoured to stammer out an explanation to the wondering and impatient Fortescue. But Lady Helena chose to give it herself, and she did so with such truth and such candour, that Lord Restormel forgot the impropriety of her conduct, and even entirely forgave it, for the sake of the winning ingenuousness with which she

avowed her fault, and the generous severity with which she blamed it.

"Helena! Helena!" cried Marcus, shaking his head, "you are a rash, daring, incorrigible girl."

"No, no, not incorrigible, I trust, especially when my error brought its punishment along with it; ask your friend whether he did not know both me and my companion all the time."

"I did; for I had seen you before, madam, and I easily guessed who your companion was."

"Therefore, you—you resolved by your behaviour, my lord, to show the rash girl the folly of her daring."

"I did so; and I now most humbly request your ladyship's pardon for my well-meant, though, perhaps, officious presumption."

"My lord, I have long forgiven you, though not myself."

'What can this mean; and pray what presumption in your lordship's behaviour

to her, has Lady Helena Fortescue to forgive?" cried Marcus, colouring deeply.

"None, Marcus, but what a brother must approve; Lord Restormel acted the part of a friend, and I only was to blame."

"Well, good people, you deal in mysteries."

"No; I dislike mysteries, brother. I tell you a simple truth, that, in the wildness of my ungoverned will, I chose to be where I had no business to be; that then I chose to behave as I had no business to behave, and that Lord Restormel, with a kindness for which I shall be ever thankful, made it his business to reprove me, to the best of his power; believe me, I I have scarcely had a moment's peace since, from the consciousness how ill you must think of me, my lord—I have felt so degraded in my own eyes."

"And, therefore, how exalted you must be in mine, Lady Helena," cried Lord Restormel.

"Well, Helena, Lord Restormel has reason to be proud," observed Marcus, with an arch smile; "all you have said proves how highly you value his good opinion; and it also proves that you made your confession with a view to recover it."

"I must desire," replied Lady Helena, with her utmost haughtiness of manner, her eyes flashing disdainfully, and her cheeks reddening with indignation, "that neither Lord Restormel nor yourself will put so wrong a construction on my motives. I have been actuated simply by a wish to regain my own good opinion, by confessing my fault, and blaming it severely and justly; and having in a measure done so, I am comparatively very indifferent to what any one else may think on the subject." Then proudly curtsying, she was going to leave the room, while Lord Restormel, piqued, yet pleased, turned again to the window to hide his conscious emotion, when Julia entered, and Fortescue hastened to meet her in no small agitation; on seeing that her eyes were red

with weeping, as he attributed her tears to the idea of meeting him; but as she gave him her hand, her tears so evidently redoubled, and she seemed so little desirous to conceal them, that he begun to think his self-love had deceived him, and he was sure it had done so, when Julia exclaimed —"Oh, Captain Fortescue, I am so miserable! but I suppose Lady Helena has told you all."

"Not I, indeed, my dear," said her friend, coming down a little from her altitudes, "I have been too much engrossed with my own miseries to think of your's. Do you not see who is here?—a forward, impertinent youth, who loves 'toad in a hole.'"

"Amazement!" cried Julia, with eyes sparkling through her tears. "Lord Restormel, welcome to Gloucester Place;" and as she extended her hand to him, he pressed it respectfully to his lips.

"So then you are friends, I see," said Fortescue: "I suppose it was not necessary for Restormel to lecture you on the

impropriety of your behaviour, Miss Villeroy."

"No, Marcus, it was not; on the contrary he complimented her, and by implication at my expense, and compared her to Una."

"Indeed! Restormel was always famous for discrimination."

"Your ladyship does my poor sayings too much honor in remembering them," said Lord Restormel; "but why is Miss Villeroy afflicted?—again I must wonder that any one could have the heart to afflict you."

"Has a true maratre a heart think you?" asked Lady Helena. "Marcus, the poor girl is broken-hearted, because Lady Villeroy has forbidden Miss Brightwen to come hither again, and Julia thinks this quite a trial."

"Yes, indeed, the greatest I have ever known," said she.

Fortescue felt oddly while she said this, and she said it with great simplicity, for at that moment she fancied that she

spoke the truth, and he tried to think that his mind was relieved by this declaration, while he rapidly assured Julia how deeply he sympathised in her distress.

"Then, now, Marcus and you, my lord, as you have my improvement so much at heart, I call on you both to sympathise in my joy on this occasion—*à quelque chose malheur est bon,* and I shall gain, I trust, what Julia loses, and when I have Julia's monitor with me, who knows but I may, in time, become as proper and pretty behaved as Julia herself?"

"You want no monitor but your own excellent head and heart, Lady Helena," said Lord Restormel.

"May be so; but as they are both silent and sulky sometimes, and will not speak, it may be as well for me to have a monitor at hand, who is always ready to speak, and speaks always wisely."

"Who is this paragon?—I should like to know her."

"That you would, my lord, she is the original of that fair transcript yonder;

she is the real Una, believe me; is not this true, Marcus?"

"Quite true; and I shall be happy and proud, for all our sakes, to see Miss Brightwen, the constant inmate of our house; but will this ever be Helena?"

"Oh, yes, I am sure papa and mamma will consent, for then they will be certain there will be no more travelling in stage-coaches for me, or any other improprieties; then, instead of being as I am now, a flaunting honey-suckle, throwing about my luxuriant branches here and there, and every where, careless, uncut and unconfined, I shall become a prim, modest, privet bush, allowed to grow to a certain height, and then kept down by rule. Indeed, my lord, you have no idea what a lopper the Brightwen is, and how I shall improve under her shears."

"Prim!—and am I prim, Lady Helena?" said Julia.

"You! oh no, my dear child, but prim I shall be, as I am always in extremes, you know."

"I only know that you are always undervaluing yourself, and I wish I did not want, dear, dear Miss Brightwen, more than you do."

"Well, say no more, I am tired of talking of myself, and all this time, Marcus, you have told me nothing of our beloved Aston."

Captain Fortescue now gave his opinion of Lord Aston to Lady Helena, while Julia and Lord Restormel talked together till the entrance of Sir George and Lady Villeroy interrupted both conferences.

Sir George received Captain Fortescue even cordially, and pleased with his manly countenance and manner, he not only invited him to dinner the next day, as Lady Helena was willing to defer her journey in order to meet him, but gave him a general invitation to the house while he remained in London. Lord Restormel was included in the invitation to dinner, but he declined accepting it, as he was going to leave London; and very soon after the friends, having business to transact, took their leave.

Julia, as soon as they were gone, retired to her own room, with a heart full of thankfulness that she had been able to subdue conscious weakness, so as not to betray any signs of still lurking attachment to the object of it, and Lady Helena was pleased that she had had an opportunity of proudly disclaiming any intention on her part to conciliate the good-will of Lord Restormel. Still she had not entirely convinced herself that her violence was any proof of this indifference, or that Lord Restormel would think it such, and when she looked into her own heart, she saw clearly that she was even more desirous of pleasing him than ever.

Neither Fortescue nor his friend left Gloucester Place more satisfied with the morning interview than Lady Helena. Neither man nor woman, as I said before, loves to give up the power which either has once possessed; and Fortescue saw, with surprise and mortification, the unusual self-possession with which Julia had addressed him, and that composure of man-

ner so little consistent with a conscious attachment. She loves me no longer, I see, said he to himself, then surely she never did love me, or even my strange conduct could not so soon have obliterated her love—love, the result of gratitude too! and spite of himself he felt dissatisfied and uneasy, resolving to watch her every look and tone the next day; and making himself believe that he wished to find her cure was certain, since he was very sure he should never love her well enough to marry her. Sometimes, too, he fancied that an attachment would spring up between her and Lord Restormel, and trying to be generous, he thought he should rejoice to see it; but he sighed when he imaged this union to himself, for he felt what a happy husband Julia's husband would be.

Lord Restormel was equally full of reverie, and unpleasant reverie too! as they walked down Gloucester Place, for he had not only convinced himself that his intercourse with Lady Helena would in-

evitably make him enamoured of her charms, but also, that should she return his love (and her want of repose of manner when she conversed with him, might have emboldened the most modest of men to hope) the decision of her character, and loftiness of her spirit would always prevent her from being on good terms with his mother, as even love itself would, probably, not teach her submission; therefore, an union between them would, he clearly saw, be likely to destroy her happiness, his own, and that of Lady Restormel, and that he must more than ever avoid the presence of Lady Helena Fortescue. Such were his cogitations when Marcus broke from his reverie, and abruptly asked him what he thought of Miss Villeroy?

"I think her very pretty," he replied, "and a perfect model of feminine delicacy and gentleness; indeed, the man who gains her must be a happy man."

"Yes, I thought she would just suit you; you had better propose to her."

"I have no inclination to do it:—admiration and approbation are not love."

"No, but they go some way towards it."

"Yes, but in this case they would halt by the way, I suspect."

"Well, but how do you like my sister, Restormel?—you hesitate, and look as if approbation here was entirely out of the question."

"Oh no, not so, Marcus! who but must approve her candour, her honesty, her ingenuous self-blame, and her form, her countenance, the tone of her voice?" here he heaved a deep sigh, and was suddenly silent.

"Is that all? what! not one word of her lofty bearing, and that proud, disdainful brow, that high spirit which beamed from every feature of her fine face, when she feared you should fancy that she wished to charm you."

"Fortescue! I wished only to praise your sister; therefore, I paused abruptly. You know I do not admire high spirit in

a woman, and yet, I must own, her pride becomes her. How beautiful she looked at that moment!"

Fortescue was satisfied; there was a heightened glow on his friend's cheek, and a faltering of his voice while he spoke, which made him flatter himself that the first wish of his heart might not be so difficult of accomplishment as he sometimes thought it; but he was too wise to say so; he was, however, disappointed, when he found Lord Restormel persist in his intention of leaving London the next day, though he might have dined in company with his sister had he been willing to stay: he also found him firm, as before, in his refusal to meet him at Laurel Grove; and when they parted, spite of his desire to believe that Lady Helena, with all her faults, had made no slight impression on Lord Restormel, his fears at least counterbalanced his hopes; Julia, meanwhile, had made her own private remarks. The state of her own heart had taught her

quick-sightedness into the heart of others, and being glad to escape from her uncomfortable feelings, she had endeavoured to find out in Lord Restormel, during his visit, some of those marks of strong interest in Lady Helena, which she had observed in the coach, and she had seen them: there was an ease in his manner when he addressed and complimented her, which it had not when he approached or spoke to her friend, and Julia was through the rest of the day, on which he called, and even till the hour of dinner, expecting to hear that Lord Restormel had written to say he was still in London, and would dine with them. But he did not come, and Lady Helena, whom she had taught to believe, and hope as she did, was, like her, disappointed. However, Fortescue came, and Julia saw with fearful pleasure how delighted her father was with his company, and how eagerly he promised to accept Sir George's invitation, to come to them whenever he was disengaged, even though

the table was any thing but an attractive one. Yet, though the hope of seeing that being from time to time, if not from day to day, to whom every faculty of her innocent heart was devoted, gave a degree of secret satisfaction to Julia, which tinted her cheek with all its former bloom, and beamed in every glowing feature; parting with Lady Helena, was even a greater trial than she expected, and the prospect of living with her unamiable mother-in-law, uncheered, unsupported by a companion that was congenial to her, threw a cloud over her path, which scarcely the brightness of love could penetrate and remove. Lady Helena was still less able to say farewell with composure, though cheered with the prospect of seeing her brother at the end of her journey, and though sure not only that her petition to her parents to invite Miss Brightwen to reside with them, as a sort of superintendent of her studies, would be instantly complied with, but that she too might possibly meet her on her arrival. But it was not alone the

idea of a long separation from Julia, which overwhelmed Lady Helena with such sorrow as caused her to sit back in the chaise with her handkerchief at her eyes for several miles after they drove from Gloucester Place; it was the conviction that she carried away, in her heart, the image and remembrance of one who evidently avoided her, and who, if attracted by her personal graces, was repelled by her mental deformities, as he would undoubtedly call them, and one too whom her pride vainly urged her to forget, because her judgment and her taste united to prove to her how much he deserved to be remembered and admired! How dearly was Lady Helena paying for the rash indulgence of her curiosity and eccentricity in accompanying Julia to London! Yet such are the inconsistencies, such is the strange pleasure attendant on the pain of a growing and conscious attachment, that Lady Helena could not regret that she had come as she did to London, could not regret that Lord Restormel had been the companion of her

journey, *even* under such circumstances. The desire of her heart had been granted; the image of her fancy was now clothed in a real form, not less attractive than that which imagination had so long portrayed, and though the consciousness of being burthened with a secret anxiety deluged her cheek with tears, and she saw no prospect of beholding the object of it again; still life had acquired a new interest in her eyes, and though she said mentally—"Oh! I am very unhappy!" she had a satisfaction in saying so, which she would have been sorry to exchange for the late repose of her feelings. The postillion having received no particular directions, had taken a road entirelynew to Lady Helena, though she was unconscious of it, but she did not long remain so.

"What a beautiful house we are coming to, my lady," said her abigail as they approached Burford Bridge! Lady Helena looked up, and could not help desiring to know to whom it belonged.

"It is Lady Restormel's," was the driver's answer.

In a moment Lady Helena's head was out of the window, nor did she withdraw her eyes from the beautiful scene, till she could nearly behold it no longer; not that Lady Helena saw its classic architecture, or its verdant lawns, so as to be able to describe them; but it was *his* home! and *he* was there! nay, he might be wandering in its neighbourhood, and perhaps she might see him. The possibility startled while it pleased her, and she suddenly drew in her head again, conscious and ashamed, though the house was still in sight. It was as well that she did so, for its owner was now in sight also; not that he expected to see Lady Helena pass, and was therefore watching for her, but he was on one of his morning rambles to his mother's cottages, and at the moment that Lady Helena's post-chaise drew near, he was cutting a hazel stick from a hedge; a little peasant boy who was accustomed to receive a pat on the head, and sometimes a halfpenny from him, had just

then ventured to ask of him this more troublesome courtesy. He did not see Lady Helena as soon as she saw him, and she was able, half-timid, half-assured, to gaze on him as he stood bare headed, for his hat had fallen off when he ascended the hedge, and he was smiling with the complacency of satisfied benevolence, while extending the twig to the stretched out arms of the blooming and delighted child. But on seeing the chaise, and recognizing the servant who sat on the driving box, he started; his countenance changed from one of calm pleasure, to one of blushing emotion, and as his foot slipped while he descended the hedge bank, it seemed, as the road was very narrow, to come in dangerous contact with the wheel. Lady Helena screamed involuntarily—while Lord Restormel called to the driver to stop, and in evident confusion, and with almost incoherent courtesy, the lady hoped he was not hurt, and the gentleman replied to the question. The conference was very short, though each wished

it longer; but they were both painfully conscious, though equally pleased; and when Lady Helena gave the command to drive on, Lord Restormel did not urge her to stay, though when she was gone, he regretted his want of sufficient self-possession to do so, and she said within herself—"how silly it was in me to seem in such a hurry to go—who knows when we shall meet again!" While he consoled himself by thinking—"Well! it is better as it is, perhaps, for if my mother had happened to come up! shall I tell her I saw her? no, if I do she will think I expected her. It is better to say nothing about it, she knows I called on her with her brother, and that information gave her so much pain, I do not like to distress her again. No—no, I had better say nothing about it. But how interestingly beautiful she looked! the tone of her voice too was so subdued! so sweet! and she had evidently been in tears—tears were on her cheek."

Lady Helena, meanwhile, had her pleasing reveries also; when she was de-

spairing of seeing Lord Restormel again, chance had thrown him in her way, and he had seemed as confused, and as full of blushes and pleasure as herself. In vain did Gibbs point out another beautiful house to her—she saw it not—she saw nothing but a man in a hedge cutting a stick—she recalled nothing but the beating of her heart when he turned round; and she recognized him, together with all the rapid, but to her distinct feelings, which the sudden meeting occasioned in her bosom, and which, the feelings of alarm excepted, were, she believed, accurately reflected in his. This was the happiest recollection of her life, and she was so absorbed in it, that she did not at first hear what her servant said at the door of the post-chaise, when she stopped at the first stage, namely, that all the horses were out, and would not be back for half an hour at least. "Then I will get out and walk," replied Lady Helena, and being directed along the road which she was to go, she desired

to be taken up, and followed by Gibbs; she ascended a hill, which commanded a fine view of the adjacent country, at the foot of which stood the mansion of Lady Restormel; Lady Helena was glad to see it again. It was the abode of him whose image was then uppermost in her thoughts, and glowing too with smiles and blushes, which it required no great self-flattery for her to impute to feelings in unison with her own. But, alas! while she gazed on the fair scene beneath her, and thought how delightful it would be to live there with such a companion as Lord Restormel, the fancied image of his frowning mother presented itself to her startled view, and clouded over her prospect. At this instant Lady Helena heard a well-remembered voice exclaim, just behind her, "I hope you admire what you see, Lady Helena;" and turning round, she beheld him of whom she was then so intently thinking.

Lord Restormel had set off on his usual ride soon after she left him, and, whether unconsciously or designedly, had

followed the track of her wheels, but not expecting to see her again, when he beheld her walking on the road before him. To go back without speaking to her was beyond his resolution, and giving his horse to his servant, he accosted her as I have mentioned above, and was not sorry, probably, to see what effect would be produced by his sudden appearance and abrupt address. However, when she turned round, radiant in beauty, and her eyes, spite of herself, sparkling with joy at sight of him, he was so full of emotion and pleasing confusion himself, that he was unable to form an accurate judgment of her's, and he gave a very incoherent reason for being on that spot at that identical moment. Lady Helena herself did not talk, for the first minute or two, with her usual precision, for he was there —and she was caught by him contemplating his residence; she soon, however, recollected herself sufficiently, to put on her hat which she had taken off, and had let her long black ringlets float unfettered

on the breeze; and though the hat covered these beauties, Lord Restormel was glad she resumed it. He thought it was indecorous to walk bare-headed in a public road, and if his mother had come by at the moment, he knew what her opinion would have been. He now asked why Lady Helena was walking?—and when he heard she would, probably, have to walk an hour before she was overtaken, he sighed with mortification to think that he dared not invite her to Green Hills, though there was a pathway down the hill, which led to the park-gate, and he fancied that as she glanced her eye towards the house, Lady Helena wondered at his want of attention and hospitality in not urging her to await the horses at his house; nay, he wondered at his own want of courage in not doing so, and it was with great pain that he could not help owning to himself, that had the lady, so circumstanced, being any one but Lady Helena Fortescue, he would have conducted her thither instantly; but he knew

his mother, and he feared that if he thus forced Lady Helena upon her, that her reception of her would be such a one as he dared not risk; he knew her suspicious nature on this subject, and he was very sure that she would suspect Lady Helena of having contrived the circumstances, in order to throw herself in his way; and, perhaps, she might also believe he was a party to the contrivance.

As these disagreeable reflections were passing in his mind, Lord Restormel was silent, and his look disturbed, and Lady Helena, who, as his eyes were fixed on the ground, could venture to look at him, saw his embarrassment, and suspected the cause. Pride now resumed its ascendancy, and she felt she ought not to be walking thus with a man, who, though the friend of her brother, and also known to herself, dared not invite her to his house, under circumstances which required this common civility from him. Accordingly, she said with an air of pique, which she vainly endeavoured to conceal—"I beg, my lord,

I may not detain you from your ride; I hope you do not think there can be any necessity for your staying with me?"

"Necessity! perhaps not," he eagerly replied; "but when you are thus so unexpectedly thrown in my way, no consideration shall force me to relinquish the happiness of being with you till I can be with you no longer."

Lady Helena was wounded, though pleased with this speech!—'As she *was thrown in his way,*' he would not leave her. It was evident, therefore, that he would never seek her; and wherefore not? because as she had often been told she was under the ban of his mother. But did not his heart resist his mother's will, and would she not be justified in endeavouring, by exciting all her powers of charming, to make that heart still more rebellious. The temptation was a strong one, but Lady Helena resisted it; she assumed a cold and distant manner; she walked with folded arms, lest he should offer her his arm, and though she certainly was not studiously disagree-

able, the usual playful charm of her manner had disappeared; the smile of fascination, the evident wish to please irradiated her countenance no more. No, thought Lady Helena, that proud, severe woman shall know I am as proud as she is, and would enter no family unless my entrance into it was solicited, or considered as a favor by every one in it; I will not condescend to charm the son of Lady Restormel. But had Lady Helena intended to do so, she could not have taken more effectual means; for he saw the secret pride, the lofty disdain which gave new dignity to her carriage and her step; and, as he suspected the cause, he could not but own that Lady Helena's resentment proved her to possess the self-respect becoming her rank in life, and her conscious superiority in mind and endowments. But what can I say to her? thought he; would I could apologize for not inviting her to Green Hills?—yet that would be worse still; perhaps she does not know that house is mine, yet to conceal it

from her would be very mean—I must name it to her at all risks.

Lady Helena, meanwhile, was on her side vainly trying to summon up resolution to mention Green Hills to him; for would it not look like wishing to be invited thither?

Lord Restormel, however, had, at last, courage to say, "That is Green Hills—my mother's seat."

"So I am told," she replied; "and it seems a beautiful place."

"It is so, and I wish—" here he paused; and Lady Helena making a great effort, looked at him steadily, as she replied, "Wish what, my lord?"

"That you could see it, and give me your opinion of Lady Restormel's improvements."

"As I never saw the place before it was altered, how could I judge of its improvements?" she coldly replied.

"True, still I earnestly wish I could—"

She had not courage to say, "Could

what my lord?" for she feared he was going to be more explicit than she liked, in giving his reasons for not inviting her, and she hastened forward in order to interrupt him, exclaiming—"Oh, what a pretty reed house that is before us; what a fine view it must command."

"That belongs to us," he replied, "and I have the key of the gate that leads to it in my pocket; pray let me have the honor of conducting you to it."

"Oh, no, my lord, I expect the carriage every moment now."

"Look! we can see the road for some distance, but there is no carriage."

"Well, if it must be so!"—and he conducted her to the reed house.

"This is most fortunate," cried he, "I was wishing that some one of undoubted taste would tell me where to leave trees for effect, and where to cut them down here; and if your ladyship would condescend to—"

"My lord, I can give you no opinion," cried Lady Helena, hastily, "concerning

aught belonging to another—I cannot, I cannot, indeed—do not ask me."

"If you will not deign to oblige me," replied he, dejectedly, "but it would have been so pleasant to have been able to say, 'Lady Helena Fortescue suggested this improvement—she pointed out that!'"

"And to whom, my lord, would you have said this?" exclaimed she, with astonishment.

"To myself; to no one else, believe me; it would have been a dear, a cherished gratification—one too sacred to have been whispered to any one else."

Lady Helena was disappointed, though pleased; she hoped he meant to say so to his mother, and that it proved she was not as obnoxious to that lady as she thought herself; but as she felt that if Lord Restormel continued to look and talk thus, she could not retain her cold dignity of manner, she rose from her seat, and expressed the utmost impatience for the arrival of the chaise, and her determination to go and meet it on the road.

Lord Restormel was now wounded in his turn; he had, he knew, been betrayed by his feelings into too warm an expression of them; still what he had said had been so respectful that she needed not to have been hurried away by it; but he evidently was annoyed, and rising also, she coldly said, "Certainly, they make you wait a long time for horses; if it be your pleasure we will walk towards the inn."

"We!—pray, my lord, pursue your ride; I fear you have already staid with me too long."

"I have, indeed, Lady Helena, if you think I have; but I do not wish to force my company on any one."

"Lord Restormel!"

"Lady Helena! you are offended."

"No; hurt, not offended."

"You wish to get rid of me!"

"No indeed; I do not."

"Then may I stay to hand you into your carriage; surely, you can bear with my tediousness till that moment comes,

for, alas, it is very near—the carriage is in sight."

"To be sure I can," she replied, smiling, in spite of herself; and presuming on that smile, he timidly offered her his arm; she could not refuse it, and he purposely stopt her every now and then to point out prospects and objects to her, in order to retard her entrance into the carriage, which was now rapidly approaching. Lady Helena, now the time of their separation drew so near, felt the kindness of her feelings towards her companion increase every moment; she feared she had been unjust, repulsive, disdainful—and she could not help trying to crowd into the few moments which she had still to pass with him, something more pleasing to his feelings, and more creditable to her own. At length she said, with her usual gracious smile and manners, "What neglectful, cold-hearted friends we are, not once to have mentioned Marcus or Julia during all the time we have been together."

"All the time has been so very short a

time, that I hope the neglect is excusable; but make it longer, and in order to make amends for the neglect, we will discuss them and their affairs at full length."

"Impossible!—I must go; but do tell me what you think of the probability of their being united?"

"That it is very great, and that they ought to marry; I am sure Fortescue loves Miss Villeroy more than he is conscious of, and I suspect that he is still master of her affections."

"Why then should they not marry?—he may never see that dangerous woman again, and when friends on both sides approve, when there is no opposing circumstance, no obstacle whatever, I cannot bear that a weakness of which a man, like Fortescue, ought to be ashamed, should prevent a union which seems to promise so much happiness; oh, how enviable they are, if they did but know it."

"Enviable, indeed!" said Lady Helena; "well, then you bid me hope that they will be married at last—quick, quick!

here is the chaise, give me all the hope you can."

"How unseasonable! to expect me to give you hope in return for the despair you are giving me by hastening away thus."

"I must go, I am impatient to get my trial over; nay, then I must get in without your aid."

"Not for the world."

"Now, then, no more parleying;—good by Lord Restormel."

"Stop!—what trial awaits you?"

"A father's just displeasure and reproof; you know I ran away t'other day, and I am now going home for the first time; and, indeed, I fear to encounter my father's frowns, for I know I deserve them; how shall I disarm them?"

"Only look at him."

Lady Helena did not dare to meet the full force of Lord Restormel's look as he said this; but kissing her hand to him, without raising her eyes entirely to his, she bade the postilion drive on; then

throwing herself back in the chaise, she closed her eyes, that she might see Lord Restormel still—see nothing but him and the parting look he gave her.

CHAP. XI.

Lord Restormel could distinguish the chaise that bore Lady Helena away no longer, though he rode after it to some considerable distance; he turned towards Green Hills, and alighting at the reed house, dismissed his horses and servant. What new and delightful recollections now awaited him there! There he had seen Lady Helena Fortescue seated, and she had admired the scene! she had pronounced it beautiful! True, it would have been more delighful to him had she pointed out improvements which he could now hasten to make, but there was a becoming delicacy in her refusal to do so, on which his memory dwelt with more than equal pleasure; for to a man like him it was even more gratifying to dwell on a moral beauty in the woman he admired, than on any kind of personal at-

traction. On such a charm it is also more wise to dwell, as the latter carries in it the seeds of growing decay, and the former of still encreasing durability. But while he was engrossed in these pleasing recollections, his mother's frowning image forced itself on his mind, and substituted a painful for pleasing consciousness. Could he dare to tell her that Lady Helena Fortescue had been with him where he then was? that twice in one hour chance had brought them together that day? Yet, how mean, how disingenuous it would be in him not to tell her this? He must, and he would inform her of all that had passed, at all risks, and however painful it might be to do so. On this he was resolved, and for fear she should hear of it from any one else, he would tell her all as soon as ever he saw her; and he saw her sooner than he expected, for she suddenly entered the reed house, and exclaiming, with wonder, at his being returned from his ride so soon; she then seated herself by him, but though he had previously resolved to say—"Oh! you

little think who was with me in the reed house this morning! he could not prevail on himself to mention that, or any other subject; but he sat in uncomfortable and restless silence!"

"What is the matter, Charles?" exclaimed his observant mother, "you are strangely absent to-day! have you met with any thing in your walks or rides to disturb you?"

"Not to disturb me—no, certainly not," was his embarrassed answer;—and there he stopped, saying to himself, "I will tell her presently."

Lady Restormel looked earnestly at him, and seeing that his cheek was flushed, and that his countenance had a peculiar expression, she exclaimed—"I am sure something unusual has occurred—had you any letters to-day?"

"Yes, one, but it was of no consequence, none at all." Then, in order to divert his mother's attention from himself, and give him the time which he fancied necessary to enable him to make the

formidable disclosure, he pointed out to her peculiar notice the view to the left, and the beautiful catching lights on a tower at a distance. Lady Restormel looked that way—but she did not see, she saw nothing but with her mental eye, and that still beheld her son's absent perturbed expression—she heard nothing but his unsatisfactory answers. It would have been well for Lord Restormel if her bodily eye had continued thus blind—but while again turning to study his countenance, she saw something glittering at the foot of a sweet-briar bush, beside the reed house, and exclaiming—"What shining thing is that! she eagerly stooped down before her son could prevent her, and took up a brooch of hair with a diamond cypher on it!—that cypher was M. F.

"Whose brooch is this," cried Lady Restormel, "and how could it possibly be dropt here?"

"Oh!" replied Lord Restormel, "I had no idea it was there! forcing a laugh,

and looking very silly; but I was going to tell you when—"

"Going to tell me, were you?" said his mother with a tone of indignant sarcasm. "Admirable, though tardy, ingenuousness! but what do I see engraven on the reverse? 'Marcus Fortescue to his beloved sister, Helena Fortescue!' Answer me, sir," she continued, her whole frame trembling with indignation—"has Lady Helena Fortescue been here?" Her manner restored Lord Restormel to his self-possession, and he coolly replied—

"She has, and has not been gone above an hour."

"And are you not ashamed to own it, for your own sake as well as her's? what should she do here? Oh! heaven!" she cried, clasping her hands convulsively, "is it possible that my son should be carrying on a clandestine intercourse with the only woman on earth that his mother dislikes, and wishes him to avoid? Speak, my lord! on your duty I command you to explain!"

"I will, when you are calm, madam."

"I cannot be calm—why thus put the finishing stroke to her effrontery! to meet a man on his own premises! not even to have the decency to insist on his coming to her's; I cannot stay here, the place is become odious to me!"

Here she rushed from the reed house, and in such agony as her son would at any other time have beheld with tender alarm. She threw herself on a bank that was near, but starting up again, she exclaimed—"But, perhaps, she has been here also?"

"I fear not," said Lord Restormel, folding his arms, and looking at her, with no pleasant expression of countenance, "fear not! I have said it, I should have loved that bank still better had it been so honoured by Lady Helena Fortescue!"

This was too much, tears and sobs of the most violent nature now burst from the labouring bosom of his mother, and agitated to a very painful degree the heart

of Lord Restormel, and the more so, because he felt that this suffering was all occasioned by his want of resolution, a weakness which had not only painfully shaken the nerves of Lady Restormel, but had also exposed Lady Helena to unjust suspicion. While this was passing in his mind, he still remained silent, feeling the more unable to speak, the more he felt the necessity of speaking; but at length he with great difficulty said—"Indeed, dear mother! I earnestly regret that my folly has exposed you to this agitation."

"Folly! then you own it to be folly!" she faintly articulated,—"but, oh! the greater pang still is occasioned by your breach of promise, and your dishonorable disingenuousness."

"I am sorry, madam, you know so little of your son, as to suppose him capable of either. Really, were it not for the duty which I owe an innocent and injured lady, I should be too proud to exculpate myself."

"An innocent and injured lady!—to

call a girl innocent, who meets a man in a reed house on his mother's grounds; that mother a stranger to her also!"

"Lady Helena did not meet me here—I saw her by accident walking on the road, and prevailed on her to visit the spot she so much admired."

"But she consented; what decent woman would have done that?"

"Not when her attendant was in sight all the time?"

Lady Restormel was silent, and Lord Restormel went on to describe his two rencontres with Lady Helena that morning; but there was so much confusion in his manner, such a faltering in his voice, and he felt evidently such strong interest in his narration, such eagerness to exculpate Lady Helena from blame, that he only made her more odious and formidable to his apprehensive parent; and when he said Lady Helena sat on the seat, and declared the view was most beautiful just there, Lady Restormel started from the bank, and hastening out of sight of the building,

declared, that to her all pleasure in it was now destroyed for ever, and that she had a great mind to take the reed house down!

"Not spoken or felt like Lady Restormel," indignantly exclaimed her son—"and for the first time in my life I am ashamed of my mother!"

"It will not tend to reconcile me to your paragon, my lord, that she has occasioned the only harsh and cruel word, the only reproof I ever heard from the lips of my son!"

Tears more in sorrow than in anger now burst from the eyes of his mother, and Lord Restormel could not behold them unmoved.

"Forgive me!" he eagerly exclaimed, "and do me the justice to listen patiently and candidly to what I have further to say."

When he had ended his explanation, even Lady Restormel could not blame, she could only lament what had passed between him and Lady Helena; but there

was one thing could not be explained away, that was, his evident confusion, absence of mind, and unwillingness to disclose what had passed; and the painful conviction which this occasioned her, it was not in her son's power to remove. True, his answer was ready, and it was sincere also—"But why, Restormel, did you not tell me all this the moment you saw me! why put it in the power of chance to make the discovery and agitate me thus?"

"Because I could not utter it."

"And why could you not?"

"Because I knew it would vex and agitate you, and make you suspicious."

"What! suspicious without any cause? as you have related the story, both the meetings were wholly unpremeditated, and as short as possible."

"They were so; but had the lady been any other than Lady Helena Fortescue, I should have insisted on presenting her to my mother, and shewing her Green Hills. This you know I could not do."

"And had it been any one else you would, I conclude, have instantly told me of the rencontre."

"Certainly; but knowing your prejudices and your suspicions, I felt a reluctance which I could not immediately conquer."

"Suspicious again! what should I suspect? answer me that?"

"That I felt; that I admired; that—"

"Oh, Charles! say no more, I cannot bear the subject! let us drop it, and never let us talk again of Lady Helena Fortescue, she has been the cause of our first quarrel, but I fear it may not be our last on her account; however, I rely on the promise you gave me."

"Which I have kept faithfully, and will ever keep."

"I believe you, still; but no matter now, let us talk of something else."

They did so; but, as I before observed, the remembrance of Lord Restormel's avowed incapability of naming his rencontres with Lady Helena, and of his em-

barrassment while doing so, haunted her whatsoever she said or did, and though resolved to banish the images from her thoughts, they were continually recurring to them.

"By the by," said she, suddenly stopping in her walk, "what have you done with that brooch?"

"It is in my pocket."

"And what do you mean to do with it?"

"Send it off express to its owner, to be sure!"

"But how could she contrive to drop it; perhaps she did not mean it should be returned—she would be better pleased if you were to keep it."

"Lady Restormel, such suspicions are unworthy of you!"

"Again, my lord, how I hate this girl!"

Lord Restormel darting an indignant glance at his mother, for the first time in his life, now left her silently and abruptly. "I am wrong, unjust, impolitic; I know I

am," said she to herself, " but I am miserable, for I clearly perceive that my son has not seen this dangerous girl with impunity; for her sake he has dared to reprove me!" Lord Restormel was not absent long, his heart smote him for the anger against a parent into which he had been betrayed, and having dispatched a messenger with the brooch, enclosed in a paper, on which he simply wrote—" With Lord Restormel's compliments!" he returned to his mother, and seeing her in tears, he drew her arm under his, which he affectionately pressed as he did so, and silently, though not sullenly, they walked towards the house. Fortunately they had company to dinner that day, and by the next morning the painful occurrences of the preceding morning seemed to be forgotten both by the mother and the son;—but were they so? no; Lord Restormel remembered Lady Helena's propriety of conduct, as well as her beauty, during her short stay with him, and he felt her endeared to him the more by the cruel in-

justice which his mother had done her; while Lady Restormel, when she recalled all that had passed, gave credit, spite of her wishes, to the accuracy of the relator, and was ashamed and sorry for the violent indulgence of her feelings into which she had been betrayed, for she was conscious that resentment of the wrong she had done Lady Helena, would endear her the more to Lord Restormel. When Lord Erpingham beheld his offending child, his reproof was severe as well as just; though the tears which Lady Helena shed, softened his heart at length into forgiving tenderness. She found that her mother and Lord Aston were gone to the pavilion, but would probably return again directly, as the wind had changed from a mild to a cold quarter; but, to make her amends for her disappointment, Lord Erpingham said he would introduce her to his new housekeeper; then throwing open the door of the inner drawing-room, Lady Helena's delighted eyes beheld Miss Brightwen!

"Now, Miss Brightwen," cried the

earl, "to you I delegate my authority, and my right to reprove this rebellious girl! you know that she feels and fears the power of your eye, and I only hope that you will keep its power exclusively for her, as it must serve her, but might injure me."

"What! gallant to Miss Brightwen already, papa!" said Lady Helena, "oh fie, and after I had so resolutely asserted, that you would never make mamma jealous even of her?"

"What do you mean, Helena?"

"I will tell you."

"Lady Helena," said Sir George Villeroy to me when we were alone, "what do you think of the dismissal of Miss Brightwen;—is it not a very silly business?"

"Very; because no one can believe that you can no longer afford to pay Miss Brightwen's salary."

"No, to be sure not, but that was not the true reason."

"Then what was?—and here, papa,

your old friend looked so silly, that I really felt for him, while he replied that the truth was, Lady Villeroy was apt to be jealous; she knew his admiration of pretty women, and she had fancied she had seen certain looks and attentions, which made her resolve never to admit so dangerous a woman into her family again."

"Lady Helena, you are joking!" cried the blushing Sophia.

"No, indeed, I am not; and I am not sure that Lady Villeroy was not right, for I have seen certain squeezes of the hand, and heard such a parting salute! and then the contrast between her age and your youth! your 'milk of human kindness, and her gall and bitterness!'"

"True, Helena, I rejoice that my old friend is now safe from such dangers, even though his safety may be my destruction."

"Again, papa! and after what I said."

"But what did you say?"

"Why, I hoped that Miss Brightwen would live with us in future, as I knew

mamma would not be jealous, for that you were not such a Lothario as he was; and, would you believe it, papa, I saw that Sir George was flattered, and not offended at his wife's suspicions of him, and at my remark; nay more, that wishing to save the expense of a governess, she had artfully pretended the jealousy she did not feel, in order to please the poor old soul's vanity, and carry her point."

"Is it possible?" cried Sophia.

"It is certain; and what a Lothario! an emaciated figure, the mere wreck of a very fine person, and both hands and one leg swathed in flannels! while the only finger that was visible was furnished with a chalk-stone, which might have saved Lady Villeroy the expense of buying chalk for the servants to keep their milk-tally with."

"Helena, Helena! have mercy on the poor baronet's infirmities!"

"But, dear papa, I am only bringing his bodily to illustrate his mental infirmity; now was it not lamentable to see that a being so grievously afflicted in body, could

be so weak in mind as to fancy that his wife could be jealous of him?"

"Yes, it was very possible that he should believe so, she might be jealous of Miss Brightwen's mental superiority and attractions."

"But then, why be jealous of certain looks? and, I assure you, Sir George talked of looks, papa; and when I vouched for your correctness of conduct, and that I believed not even naughty Miss Brightwen could corrupt you, Sir George said, you were always a pattern of propriety, and that you were nick-named Sir Charles Grandison—but that *he*, though he admired, could never imitate you. And why not," cried I, pertly enough, "if you had really admired and wished to follow such an example?"

"And what did he say to that?"

"Why, he looked oddly, and laughed; and in short, papa, I saw very clearly that he was pleased to be thought unworthy to be trusted in the same house with a Sophia Brightwen, and that in de-

claring she believed him a gay deceiver, and what I should call a profligate; Lady Villeroy knew she was paying court to him, and I, sick and sorry at heart, began to moralize, though not allowed, like the melancholy Jaques."

"And, pray what thought my moralizing daughter?"

"Why, I wondered how old a man must be before he can be secure from being the dupe of an artful woman, and a dupe on the score of vanity too?"

"I will endeavour to guess, Helena, if you will tell me at what age a woman is secure from being the dupe of an artful man, and on the score of vanity too?"

"I fear," replied Lady Helena, shaking her head, "that our respective questions must remain unanswered till the philosopher's stone is found; and now, my newly-acquired treasure, I beg to see you alone in my dressing-room."

The next day the brooch (which Gibbs but not Lady Helena had missed) arrived in safety, with Lord Restormel's compli-

ments on the direction: perhaps Lady Helena was disappointed, but she did not own it even to Sophia; however, the piece of his hand-writing was carefully locked up. She then wrote to Julia, giving an account of her journey, and of her delight at seeing Miss Brightwen; she concluded thus:—"Our friend looks very pale and very thin, but prettier than ever: how anxiously she enquired after you, and how rejoiced she was to hear the account I had to give her of your marvellous self-command! marvellous is the only term I can use when thinking of it. I declare to you, Julia, it almost deceived me, and made me think you had really conquered your attachment to Marcus; true, your eye was downcast, but then so it always is; there is the advantage of an habitually modest countenance; I could never so disguise my feelings; a downcast eye would really be the most immodest thing possible in me, it would tell every one when I was in the presence of the beloved object, how much in love I was.—Heigh ho!

we expect mamma and Aston to-morrow, and then I, who am always in extremes you know, am going the next day to commit an act of penance, and a work of supererrogation both in one. I find that I mortified and hurt those good, tiresome souls the Magnals, by going away during their visit, and have, therefore, written to invite myself to stay two days with them after I have seen Aston and mamma; they receive me, and papa commends me.—Write fully to me, dearest girl, often, or I shall be jealous of Miss Brightwen."

The next day she wrote as follows:—

"I tell you what Julia, I am resolved to turn author and write novels—what with my own adventures in a stage-coach! and those of other persons well known to me, I have already materials sufficient—only '*le vrai in est pas toujours le vrai semblable,*' and I have such a romantic and improbable incident to relate! *en attendant,* let me warn you to expect to see advertised, Romantic Incidents! a tale, in two volumes, by a lady of high distinction.

Now for my story:—but to make you believe it possible, I must premise, that my father has not been Earl of Erpingham more than twenty years, that he was originally Lord Stanmore, that Aston's name is not Fortescue, though ours is, as he bore the name of Elmont from his birth, being heir to the estates of his godfather, Mr. Elmont, and was to bear his name. Now, Julia, keeping this in mind, let me beg you to figure me to yourself leading Aston into the drawing-room, when I could bear to forego the dear *tête-a-tête* I had had with this beloved brother, and telling him I would now shew him the new treasure our family had lately acquired, presenting him, at the same moment, to Miss Brightwen. When I said 'Lord Aston,' Sophia's countenance remained unmoved, and she smiled and curtsied with her usual sweetness and grace; but Aston no sooner heard me say 'Miss Brightwen!' than, starting and turning pale, he darted on her penetrating and enquiring glances, and, seizing

my arm, exclaimed—'Brightwen! what Brightwen, and is her name Sophia?' 'My name is Sophia,' she replied, looking as much surprised as I was. Aston then, after an earnest and agitated survey of her features, grasped her hand, heaved a deep sigh, and suddenly quitted the room; I followed him, conjecturing that our friend's name and herself were connected with a dreadful affliction in poor Aston's life, and one which he has never entirely overcome. I was right in my conjectures, for thus it was:—Miss Brightwen's mother was a widow, with one son, the delight of every one who knew him, and more especially of his half-sister, Sophia, and of his father-in-law, who really doted on him. Edward Everard possessed an independent fortune, and at the age of two and twenty he went abroad, where he became intimately acquainted with my brother, then called the Honorable Augustus Elmont, the son of Lord Stanmore. These young men were soon inseparable, and Sophia Brightwen was as well known

by character to my brother as to her own; nay, by face also, for Mr. Everard had her picture, and Augustus, a romantic youth of twenty, took in something like love at his eyes from her looks, and in his ears from hearing her letters read—at least I conjecture this, and not without reason. Well, two years passed on happily to the friends, when Augustus became the object of jealously to a Neapolitan nobleman, and with the thoughtlessness of presumptuous youth, scorned the menaces which he knew were uttered against him. In vain did his wise and pious friend tell him that the appearance of evil was sinful, and that as he seemed in the eyes of the world, and especially of the offended husband, to be carrying on a criminal pursuit, he ought to quit the place, and never see the lady more. Pride made him persevere, for he could not, he said, bear to have it thought that fear of consequences could influence his conduct, and persevere he did; the consequence was a challenge—the place the sea-shore—the time midnight—the light

that of the moon; in vain did Everard try to obtain leave to negociate a reconciliation with the offended husband—in vain reprobate the wicked practice of duelling; all, therefore, he could then do, he did—he accompanied Augustus to the place of rendezvous. My heart bleeds while going on, but go on I must. The marquis came apparently alone; therefore, Everard was obliged to retire, after having tried in vain to prevent the combat. They fought, and the marquis fell; but scarcely was he on the ground, when three men hitherto unseen, but no doubt prepared by him, rushed forward, and while one of them bore the marquis away, the others stabbed Augustus with their stilettos, then, before Everard could prevent them, they raised him between them and flung him into the sea—one of them having previously wounded Everard in the arm. They then disappeared and left Everard at liberty to follow the impulse of his noble heart; he plunged, therefore, into the sea, which at that place was full and deep; swam,

spite of his wounded arm, after the body of my brother, and at length caught hold of it, when with inconceivable difficulty he had nearly dragged it to shore; a boat filled with revellers, amongst whom was poor Everard's servant, appeared in sight, and they beheld by the light of the moon on the water one man floating as if dead, upheld by one who was evidently near sinking; but Everard's now fast-closing eye, saw that a chance of life for his friend, at least, was at hand, and Everard struggled a few moments longer till the boat had reached him, when Richard with a scream of agony recognised his master and Augustus! In another moment my brother was in the boat, and when they again turned to take up his generous friend, they saw him no more; he had sunk, had gone under the boat, and all with him was over on earth! He had died the victim of friendship and disinterested humanity. The body was not found for days after; but Augustus was saved! he recovered for his wounds,

though many, were not mortal. But what a recovery was his, when the whole truth which his friend's servant told him in all its sad details was presented to his view; months of illness and of sorrow succeeded; months of delirious anguish, during which time he was an object of interest and anxiety to many, and the marquis when he recovered was forced to quit Naples; but Aston was most indebted for kindness and care to a widow lady older than himself, who lived in the same hotel with him, and who nursed him with a sister's affectionate attention. Meanwhile, Mr. Brightwen on receiving the sad tidings was so excessively distressed as well as the mother of Everard, that they both declared they never could bear to see my brother, or to hold any intercourse with him; and they agreed never to ask any information relating to the affecting circumstance; but though it was a subject forbidden, it never ceased to be dearly remembered, and the poor mother at length sunk under her grief. Lord Stanmore, therefore, and his son, were objects

neither of interest nor curiosity to the Brightwens; but, on the contrary, they avoided the slightest remembrance of either; consequently, they knew not that the one was become Earl of Erpingham, and the other Lord Aston. My father, meanwhile, concluded that Everard's father bore the same name as himself, suspected not that the Mr. Brightwen at whose house in Norfolk he was so hospitably entertained some years after, was the father of the youth, who had given his life to save that of his son! nor had Mr. Brightwen the slightest suspicion that the nobleman whom chance had led to his house was the father of him who had deprived him of one of the beings dearest to him on earth. But to the ear of poor Aston the name of Brightwen was tenderly and awfully familiar—and till gratitude led him to repay Mrs. Scroope's evident love and affectionate and watchful nursing by the offer of his hand, Aston had cherished in his heart the image of his Sophia, and an earnest wish to see, and perhaps to woo

her, if she could endure the sight of one who had caused the death of her brother! Judge then what must have been his feelings when I presented him to her? Judge, also, what her's must have been when she found that she had beheld in my brother the being so long to her an object of abhorrence, however unintentionally the injury he had done her! But I was not prepared for the effect which this knowledge had on her in one respect! I was hurt beyond expression when I heard her declare, and with a wildness that startled me, that she could not stay a moment under the same roof with the destroyer of her beloved Edward! at first I was shocked and speechless, but I did not long remain so, as I felt, that for the first time, and probably the last, I had the vantage ground of Miss Brightwen; and firmly, but tenderly, I told her, that I did not expect injustice, and its consequences, ungenerous actions from her; nor did I expect to see her at once forfeit her long acknowledged claims to respect on the ground of her un-

common self-command and well-regulated feelings. This expostulation produced a good effect immediately—she struggled violently with herself, burst into tears, and begged me to forgive whatever she had uttered in the first violence of her emotions. When she became more calm, I told her that Aston had suffered more from the results of a calamity of which he had been the unintentional cause, than most persons from the evil actions which they had intentionally performed: that his health and his spirits had been utterly destroyed by the sorrow which he had experienced, and the memory of her brother was even yet green in his soul.—'No wonder,' she exclaimed, 'so it must be in that of every one who knew him—and in his; but indeed, indeed, I pity Lord Aston, though I cannot, cannot see him!' 'Not see him, whom your brother loved as his own soul! he for whom he risked his life, and, I doubt not, was contented to loose it!' she remained silent, and shuddered violently; 'would your beloved Everard be

pleased at such a decision?—would it not soothe his spirit, if it could be hovering over you, to see himself the bond of union between the two beings he loved so very dearly, and to know that you bewailed his loss together with sympathizing tears?' still she was silent. At this moment my mother entered the room, with her face disfigured with excessive weeping:—'Helena!' said she, 'your poor brother asks for you? Miss Brightwen, the sight of you has opened all my sons anguish afresh, and I never saw him so wretched.' 'Then let me go away directly,' cried Sophia, starting up. 'No,' replied I, taking her hand, 'it is a justice due to poor Augustus, after all he has suffered, to see him before you go, and soothe him with a word of kindness. Any other conduct were unworthy of Miss Brightwen—unworthy of her whom I have hitherto been proud to look up to as an example of Christian energy and Christian resignation.' 'You are right, Lady Helena,' she meekly replied, 'only leave me to myself for an

hour, and then do with me as you please.' I then led her to her own chamber, left her, and hastened to my poor brother, who was, I found, comforted by the idea of seeing her, and with the faint hope that she would, in time, feel a mournful pleasure in his company. At the end of an hour she sent for me, and said she would see Lord Aston, if I desired it; but he was too unwell then to bear the interview. To-morrow, he means to see her. The rest of the evening has been passed in explaining the almost improbable concurrence of circumstances which had made us remain in ignorance of the claims which Miss Brightwen and her family have upon ours; claims which, in the day of their distress, we should have eagerly and thankfully acknowledged. I cannot find words to express to you Aston's excessive agony, when he heard what difficulties Sophia had undergone, and to think that she, whom unknown, he had almost adored, should also have experienced pecuniary hardships, and have been forced to work for her bread—

the thought was frenzy!—then to find her, too, a sort of dependant in his own family; but dependant she should, he said, be no longer—that he was determined upon. In short, the consequence of this trying scene will be, I trust, a happy one in some respects. But Lord Erpingham, not Lord Aston, must make Sophia Brightwen independent; Lord Aston may assist the father, but you and I know, Julia, that Sophia would not accept pecuniary favors from a young man, if, indeed, she accepts them at all; but whether she does or no she must, in future, feel that her residence under our roof is a favor done to us. It enables us to repay a small portion of the debt of gratitude, which we owe to the memory of Edward Everard. Aston says she is so like her brother, and so like her own picture. Poor fellow! I wish him safe back again with his disagreeable wife. I will now send this letter off, and write to you again, when the interview is over. Show or send this letter to Marcus."

The next day Lady Helena wrote as follows:

"Our prospect brightens! The meeting went off to admiration, and I see that Aston was right in thinking that, in time, Miss Brightwen would have a melancholy pleasure in being with him; all I now fear is, that he will have too lively a pleasure in being with her. He gazes on her so intently, and so fondly; she says, 'Poor man! I see that he compares my features with those indelibly impressed on his memory.' That may be true; but in the meanwhile I fear that the former may become indelibly impressed on his heart. My mother, who thinks Aston incapable of any human weakness, has built a very pretty frabric on a foundation suggested by Aston. He has heard us all extol Miss Brightwen's power in forming the female mind for a woman's best and dearest duties, by instilling Christian principles, and he exclaimed—'Oh, that she could or would live with us, and educate Everard and Edwardina!' (for so they are christened

after poor Mr. Everard). 'Why should he not?' cried my mother eagerly. 'But do you think she would?' he replied; 'then you know I could, without any difficulty, offer her an independence.' My mother told him she would feel his way for him, and she wishes my father and her father to have a meeting. I find Mr. Brightwen is *living* in one of the Midland counties, and she thinks that if my father could reconcile him to the idea of his daughter residing under the roof of the man who was the cause of his son-in-law's death, that then Sophia's scruples would cease, provided she has any, and provided, which I think would be very likely, her only objection would be founded on his probable aversion to such a plan. She is at this moment mentioning the subject to Sophia; but, I am sure this plan will be relinquished very soon, for I know Aston. I do not think with my mother, that Aston is incapable of human weakness, but I do think and know that he is capable of struggling with and rising superior to it; time will

discover whether I am right or no. More changes since I wrote yesterday; my mother and Aston are going for a month to Hastings, because it is warmer there than at the pavilion, and my mother's apprehensive tenderness, fancies Aston worse though every one else think him better; she wishes him to be with her alone, because she sees that he is often agitated when with Sophia. Papa is going to see Mr. Brightwen, and, as I suspect, to find out if he can be of any service to him. When he returns, Miss Brightwen and myself are to go with him to Hastings. While in Derbyshire he means to pay one or two visits, therefore his return is uncertain. They set off on their different journies next week. I thank you for your letter; but I wish you would complain a little and murmur at your lot. What a dull and trying life you are now leading. Marcus is, however, a comfort to you, I hope; he writes to me in such raptures of your meek and uncomplaining spirit, and I really believe the patient

sweetness with which you endure the joyless tenor of your existence, and the pain inflicted by the crossness of your maratre, have forged for the poor man's heart a stronger fetter than your beauty and your talents ever did; for the one was snapped as soon as made, the other, I believe, will last for life; but I may be mistaken, therefore I am glad to see by your letters, that you continue to regard Marcus only as a friend, and as likely to remain so. I have been to the Magnals, and I trust that I behaved very prettily on the whole; to be sure I was once wicked enough to own to the old lady that I was a friend to reading and writing, and thought that an educated population was more likely to know wrong from right than an ignorant one; and I gently insinuated a fear to the old gentleman, that his descent from Charlemagne was not quite made out in a direct line, for that I had heard the reputation of his great, great, great, great-grandmother was not quite *intact*, which heresy if I had

been a man, would certainly have cost me my life, or the risk of it at least in a duel, with slugs in a saw-pit; for the tone in which he said, 'Lady Helena, give me leave to tell you,' was one of fierce defiance, till his wife saw the corners of my mouth work with ill-suppressed laughter, and exclaimed—'my dear Heronimus! do you not see that Lady Helena is only joking with you;' but, 'pon honor, Julia, this was the very height and front of my offending; in the whole two days I passed there, and I was called kind, and sweet, and delightful, and good, till I began to believe I was so: yes, *good* was their word—no, I can't be good, because I am not happy! But why am I not happy? I do not exactly know—oh yes, I do, but I will not tell why. Cannot you guess, Julia? Promise me you will never go in a stage-coach again as long as you live. I never will, I assure you; the remembrance of my journey in one, will, I fear, last through my life.'"

I shall now give an extract from one of Julia's letters.

"What shall I do, dearest Lady Helena? Captain Fortescue is here every day, and for hours at a time! and he has resumed that manner which I once thought meant so much! I now never dare, never can raise my eyes to his; and I do assure you, that I rejoice in papa's having permitted Lord Clanross to visit here, because it gives me an opportunity of dividing my attention; and, as I have begged papa to tell him he has nothing to expect, I hope that coming will do him no harm; papa thinks him so handsome, and Lady Villeroy says he is quite an Adonis; and she praises him so much! but I think sometimes she does it to vex me, because she knows I prefer your brother; yet it is very uncandid in me to think this;—would Miss Brightwen were here! I am so afraid of betraying the weakness of my heart! so afraid he should despise me for it! but, how selfish I am; how unkind not to

tell you sooner what will interest you so much more!—Lord Restormel has been here; he called alone, and I saw him alone; he came very early, he said, in hopes of finding me at home; your last letter came in while he was with me;—from dear Lady Helena, cried I; he blushed excessively, and tried to look unembarrassed, but could not. 'I hope she is well!' said he, in a hoarse voice, and blowing his nose as if to hide his emotion. 'Oh, quite well!' I replied, 'but she has been very anxious—' 'Anxious! is Lord Aston worse?' 'No, but his feelings have been much tried lately;' and then I could not help shewing him your interesting letter on that subject, even though there was at the beginning and end of it an allusion to adventures in stage-coaches. It seemed to me, that for some time, he read and saw nothing but those words, and read them over and over again, for he was a long time before he turned over the leaf, and then, as if not able to think of any thing but you, he said, 'Did Lady

Helena tell you of our rencontre on the road?' 'She did.' 'And did she not say she thought it very odd, that, being so near my mother's house, I did not ask her to stop and take some refreshment?' 'No,' said I, 'she did not, but, as I believe, she is aware that she is no favourite with Lady Restormel, she could not wonder at your not asking her to the house; and it is very certain if you had, my lord, that she would have refused your invitation.' 'Miss Villeroy,' said he, in great confusion, 'are you not aware that my mother never saw Lady Helena, except across a theatre, how then should she—' here he paused, unable to proceed with what he knew was a falsehood. 'Lady Restormel's prejudice against my friend, is a sufficient proof that she does not know her,' said I, 'and Captain Fortescue himself informed both me and his sister, that Lady Restormel had spoken unkindly of her.' 'Well, madam, well! I cannot consistently, with truth, deny this; therefore, as it is a most painful subject to me, I must beg

leave to drop it, assuring you that the son shares not the feelings of his mother on this point.' 'I see that very clearly,' replied I, with great simplicity, and forgetting myself entirely. 'Miss Villeroy, what do you see?' cried he, changing colour. I was then embarrassed in my turn, and with difficulty replied, 'I see, that is, I see you do my friend more justice, because you know her better.' 'True,' said he, sighing, and as if relieved; 'but, let me proceed with the letter;' and, as he did so, he became deeply interested; still he paused to praise you and your admirable expostulation with Miss Brightwen. When he had finished the letter, he sighed deeply, and said nothing; then folding it up, he looked some time at the address, and I really expected every minute he would have pressed it to his lips, but he did not, he only said, 'What a beautiful hand-writing!' thanked me, and returned it to me. Soon after he exclaimed, 'Poor Aston! I am told he is not happy with his wife; she knows he did not marry

her for love, and is therefore jealous of every woman he meets, though hitherto without cause. I am really inclined to wish, with Lady Helena, that he were safe home again!' He then relapsed into reverie, and soon after took his leave, telling me he was going to set off for a ramble in the Highlands the next day. 'I am a restless mortal,' cried he, 'as he opened the door, and never so restless as now; my mother has great forbearance with me, and bears my absences well; however, though frequent, they are not long, and I leave her now in excellent health. God bless you! I shall hear of you from Fortescue—who if, as report says, Lord Clanross is to be the happy man, comes hither much too often for his peace.' I wish he had not said this; but it was in one respect comforting without being dangerous; as it proved that he did not see I loved his friend. 'Your brother comes hither too often for his peace if I marry another!' those were his words; but I must not dwell on them; however, it is very certain

that he is jealous of Lord Clanross's visiting here. The first time he saw him, he turned pale, and scarcely returned his salutation! Will you be very angry if I say that I cannot help thinking of the dog in the manger. Now, is not that more like you than me? You see I grow saucy—do you not therefore suspect that I am growing happy? How much easier is it to be amiable and proper when one is miserable than when one is happy! Well, then, ought we not to be even more thankful for a state of trial, than a state of happiness? I know Miss Brightwen would say yes.—Oh! that she were but here to teach me to bear trials with fortitude and blessings (should any be in store for me) with calm and thankful equanimity!

"Ever your affectionate, and faithful

"JULIA VILLEROY."

CHAP. XII.

Lady Helena replied thus—"Indeed, Julia, if your happiness encreases in proportion to your sauciness, you are in a fair way of being intolerably happy! and to punish you I send you the following *rabat-joie*.—Our dear Miss Brightwen is again summoned to her sister, whose life of toil and woe seems about to end.—Still Sophia, whose love for her encreased with the consciousness of the good she was able to do her (the grand secret of all attachment), shrunk from the idea of a final separation from her, and though she bears it with resignation feels it as a trial. For my own part I selfishly rejoice at this her removal from a life of care, as I flatter myself that now Miss Brightwen will be suffered to remain stationary here, for I am very sure that Aston will find some excuse for giving up the plan he named to my mother. He

has been over from Hastings once since he went thither, and staid here two days, which two days he spent almost exclusively (except when engaged on the business for which he came) with Sophia. He shewed her her picture too, which was found amongst her brother's things—and which he has never parted with. The sight of it overcame her excessively, and she wept over it, pressed it to her heart and her lips repeatedly, while a thousand dear and tender recollections thronged over her mind, and then she was depositing it in her work-bag, as if she thought it was her own property, when Aston snatched it from her, exclaiming—"What are you doing? it is mine!" and instantly quitted the room with it to her excessive amazement—for said she, its value must be greater to me than to Lord Aston; but perhaps he was afraid to seem willing to part with it, lest I should think it a slight to poor Edward's memory; therefore, I dare say I shall have it in time.—'I dare say you will (I dryly replied) but not yet.'

My mother writes word that Aston returned in very low spirits to Hastings, and that he becomes more absent, and more gloomy every day, and talks of going back to France very soon, and then proceeding directly to Nice with his family—but not one word of taking Miss Brightwen with him, to my mother's great surprize, but not to mine.

Now let me desire your congratulations on the encrease of my importance. Here I am, in solitary but supreme dominion! *I*, the rash, eccentric Lady Helena Fortescue, aged only eighteen, and a few months am *reine regnante* of Laurel Grove! My father went on his tour four days ago, and I cannot learn that he desired Sophia to take care I did not fall out of the window, or into the lake, but I verily believe he did desire her to keep a sharp look out after me—for they were closeted before he went, and he said with great significance—"Helena! I leave you under excellent care, and in excellent company! therefore I can feel no anxiety concerning you!"

" Poor deceived man ! for the excellent care left me to my own devices three days after, and the excellent company became entire solitude ; but no matter—what says the poet,

' Oh! lost to virtue ! lost to manly thought,
Who think it solitude to be alone !'

Now, lost to virtue, I certainly am not, in the common sense of the expresion, nor am I lost to manly thought, if thinking of some more particular man, such as Aston, and perhaps one other explains that phrase ; and I think it no solitude to be alone, on the contrary, I enjoy the novelty of my situation, and I was really so child-like the other day as to receive the good old Magnals, who came to call on me, sitting on the raised ottoman in the drawing-room, *en reine*, like the penny prints of Queen Anne, with a melon in one hand for a globe, a poker in the other for a sceptre, and a red shawl thrown royal-mantle fashion over one shoulder. The poor old lady thought me mad at first, but her hus-

band understood the joke, went down on one knee, and kissed hands; you may suppose they would gladly have taken me home with them, but I would not go; I told them Lady Helena Fortescue was delightful company, and that at present I could not bear to part with her; this was a fact, which they could not be so uncivil as to contradict; so here I am—and I go singing all over the house like Alexander Selkirk in the song,

'I am monarch of all I survey!'

I have began a course of reading, and I have refused to join my mother at Hastings yet, especially as I could not have a bedroom to myself, for Lady Aston's sister and niece are on a visit to Aston, but when they go away, I mean to succeed them. Your letter, dearest girl, is just brought in! and I grieve over its contents! your poor, suffering father! It must be dreadful to see a parent suffer! but it must be a comfort to you to see Sir George so cheered by the presence and attentions of my brother! and also to know

that every pang you feel is met by the man you love best, with the most tender sympathy; but pray, pray take care of your own health! Marcus says he is anxious and wretched about you! 'Strong terms those! and I repeat them, that on one subject you may be anxious and wretched no longer. Shall I come to you; I dare come without asking leave on an occasion like this? Say the word, and I abdicate my throne directly.

"Thine, more than my own,

"H. F."

Julia refused to accept Lady Helena's kind offer, from a regard to the feelings of Lady Villeroy to whom she saw the visit would be unwelcome; and to say the truth, in the constant society of Fortescue, who shared her attendance in the sick-room during the day, she had now every possible alleviation of her sufferings which she could receive; for Marcus, whose heart had been deeply impressed by the sterling worth of her character, as shown by her quiet, unpresuming performance of some of the dearest and most sacred duties of

life, had now requested permission of Sir George to pay his addresses to her; and the delighted father had declared, that could he but live to see his daughter the wife of Fortescue, he should not have a wish ungratified. This joyful news was instantly communicated to Lady Helena by Julia and her lover; but though welcome and ever precious as the communication was to the heart of that affectionate sister, it reached her at a moment when a strange, unexpected, embarrassing and distressing circumstance nearly engrossed every faculty of her soul, and had awakened these various and contending emotions.

When Lord Restormel set off on his journey to Scotland, his mother went on a visit to a friend in Sussex; but her waiting-maid who accompanied her, was seized with an alarming illness, which was soon pronounced to be a fever of a very dangerous and probably a catching nature. Lady Restormel had her, therefore, instantly removed to a farm-house in the neighbourhood inhabited by her own sister, and sent for her mother also to attend on her; and

having waited on the spot till assured that the poor woman was out of danger, she set off on her return home, feeling exceedingly unwell herself, and unable to endure any society. On her road, one of the leaders fell, as the heavily laden carriage was coming rapidly down a steep chalky-hill, very near the lodge at Laurel Grove; the consequence was an immediate overturn down a small hollow on the side of the road, from which Lady Restormel received a severe blow on the head, and was taken up insensible!

"What a comfort it is!" cried one of the servants, "that we are so near a gentleman's house."

"Who lives there?" and on being told it was the seat of Lord Erpingham, the man exclaimed with great joy—"Why, that is Captain Fortescue's father, and he is my young lord's particular friend! let us take her thither directly:" accordingly, she was driven, still insenble, to the door of Laurel Grove, and Lady Helena, who remembered the liveries,

though she had only beheld them once, saw, from the balcony in which she was sitting, the carriage with the Restormel arms slowly driving up to the door, and a lady, apparently dead, inside of it! What could this mean? but impulsive humanity does not pause to think. In an instant, Lady Helena was at the door, and in another, the story was told, the intrusion explained, and Lady Helena Fortescue, with a sort of bewildering emotion, a sort of half conscious consciousness, a painful pleasure, saw the woman who disliked and feared her, admitted as a guest under her roof, and thrown upon her hospitality and humanity for relief and assistance—that woman, too, the mother of Lord Restormel! oh, how rapidly did her heart beat, and how impeded was her breathing, while she said within herself, how happy I am, to have an opportunity of returning good for evil?

When the surgeon who had been sent for arrived, he pronounced his patient to be in great danger, and feared there was a

concussion of the brain; but his fears were removed when she recovered her senses entirely, and demanded to know where she was. On hearing she was at Lord Erpingham's, and that Lady Helena Fortescue, the only one of the family at home, begged leave to pay her respects to her, she tried to rise from her chair, and exclaimed with a tone of aversion—"Lady Helena Fortescue! no, no; take me away for mercy's sake—take me away any where else directly! *I* see Lady Helena Fortescue—odious! no, no—no Lady Helena Fortescue shall come near me." The surgeon and attendants saw in this symptoms of impending delirium only; but Lady Helena, who stood behind her sofa and heard it all, considered it as the immediate impulse of her heart, and understood its cause, and felt its importance, only too, too well. But her line of conduct was clearly marked out to her, and beckoning the surgeon out of the room, she desired to know whether Lady Restormel could be moved with safety. He declared it was impossible.

"Then," said she, "assure her of this yourself, and tell her also, that as she must be kept perfectly quiet, Lady Helena Fortescue must not be allowed to see her, nor must any one—but tell her, likewise, that the servants, and all the house contains, are at her service, and that she is absolute in command here." The surgeon obeyed, and Lady Restormel ungraciously said, "Well, as I must stay here, it is a comfort to know I can't see Lady Helena, and the house is not *her's*, and her mother was once my intimate acquaintance." The surgeon was now convinced that dislike and not delirium spoke, but though he was surprized, he thought it right to ask no questions.

Lady Helena's feelings were now undefinable even to herself, she was glad and she was sorry, she was mortified and yet she was gratified. She was enabled to do good to an enemy—and perhaps she might convert an enemy into a friend, hatred into affection. But would it not be mean in her to wish to do so? "No, let her hate me still!" was the whispered reply

of her proud heart; and while she busied herself in every possible preparation to accommodate the sufferer, and saw herself rendered as comfortable as her sad state would admit of, Lady Helena turned faint with strangely contending feelings, while she almost murmured aloud—"And yet she hates me; however, she hates me without a cause; but she shall continue to hate me, I will not bribe her into loving me; no, no, not even though she is Lord Restormel's mother! but he! oh, where is he? what he will feel if ——" here she ran to the surgeon to ask if she had not better send for her son directly.

"By all means," was the answer.

"Where is your lord," said he to Lady Restormel's gentleman?

"In Scotland!"

Lady Helena burst into tears as she exclaimed—"In Scotland! and his mother thus! Poor! poor Restormel! but what is his address; and could he not be overtaken?"

That was impossible; and he had

given no orders but that his letters should be directed to the post-office, Edinburgh.

"Then eight days must elapse before he could arrive, and what may not happen in that eight days!" said the surgeon despondingly.

"But write, write directly!" cried Lady Helena, "and do not, do not tell him all you fear! think what a journey he would have!"

"Do you know Lord Restormel?" he replied, struck by her strong emotion.

"Very little, but I well know his love for his mother."

He then wrote as she desired, and was going to seal the letter when he thought it would only be kind in her to add a few lines, and she took the pen with trembling fingers, but delicacy and pride resumed their power over her, and she forbore, returning the pen unused. The surgeon, however, seemed inclined to add something, but did not, and proceeded to fold and direct the letter.—"I thought," said he, "of telling Lord Restormel, that though all

the family here were out, except your ladyship, that he might be sure all would be done for the good lady that could be done, as you were very kind."

"And why did you not?"

"Because your ladyship knows the old lady dislikes you so, I thought it would make the young lord more uneasy to know that her friend the countess was not at home, and that you were."

Lady Helena said nothing, but turned away, shocked and disappointed; and she wished that she had written, for she was sure the son did not dislike her, though the mother did; and she fancied that he would have been pleased to know she was under her exclusive care—but it was now too late: and, after all, whatever feelings might urge to the contrary, judgment approved her not having written. As the surgeon had said all that was necessary, it was more delicate, more dignified! more what Lady Restormel herself would have approved, and a degree of *retenue* of which she would have thought Lady Helena incapable. To

one person, however, Lady Helena thought it necessary to write directly—and that was to her mother; though she could not but wish that the task of providing for the necessities of her reluctant guest should be her's, and her's alone; she was, therefore, pleased to find, by her answers, that Lady Erpingham fancied it impossible for her to leave Lord Aston. Still, though her servants were very attentive, she felt a degree of painful responsibility when the surgeon declared that Lady Restormel grew more alarmingly ill every day, and that he was convinced she was labouring under fever—not the result of the accident, but which was lurking in her veins when the accident happened — fever, probably the result of her being so much with her sick servant: "However," said he, "she may, with medicine and care, struggle through; but I must beg for further advice."

Lady Helena instantly sent off for the nearest physician, who confirmed the opinion of Lady Restormel's danger. "Gentlemen," said Lady Helena, in a faltering

voice, " with your leave, I will do in Lady Restormel's case what I should do in that of my own mother. I will have a consultation of physicians, if she grows worse. Poor Lord Restormel shall have the comfort of knowing all was done that could be done."

Lady Restormel did grow worse, and two of the first London physicians were sent for by Lady Helena. They approved the treatment already pursued — prescribed medicines to be given, with a degree of regularity and attention, which it required the most careful and attentive of nurses to administer — but declared their opinion, that the case was one of the most imminent danger! " Your ladyship may venture in," said the surgeon to Lady Helena, one day, " the poor lady will not know you; she knows no one, her delirium is so high! —she takes your Gibbs for her own waiting maid, who, by the bye, and between ourselves, is not the best of nurses; for I see she can't bear sitting up, and I found her dozing last night when she ought to

have given the medicine." Lady Helena was shocked: for on strict attention to the orders given, the life of the patient might depend! What was to be done, and whom could she trust, as neither the surgeon nor physician could stay at night? But a ray of light broke in upon her;—Lady Restormel could not know her, and the surgeon should not see her; she would swear Gibbs to secresy, and she herself would be the nightly watcher by the bed of the sufferer. In vain did Gibbs refuse to let her lady perform her difficult duty. Lady Helena having sworn her and the other attendant on the Bible, never to betray the secret, put on a bed-gown like that in which Gibbs nursed, wrapped the same shawl round her, and having heard the directions given by the medical attendants, she gave the medicine and the nourishment herself to the fevered lips of the invalid, met the frenzied glance, full of strange hallucinations, secure of being unrecognized, and had the proud and generous delight of trying to save the life of

that being, in a state of helpless unconsciousness, from whose repulsive eyes she would have fled with resentment, when that eye possessed the power of distinguishing; and who, had she been conscious, would have rejected her kindness with contemptuous coldness!—certain it is that during the hours which Lady Helena passed by the bedside of Lady Restormel, she experienced some feelings of finer and more exalted satisfaction than she had ever experienced in her life, and never, never did her lips breathe out addresses so full of fervour and of thankfulness to her Creator. But no human being, except Gibbs and one other servant equally sworn to secresy, knew of the risk which she was running, or the fatigue she was undergoing; and when the medical attendants learnt from Gibbs every day on account of that attendance, which she had not given, (for she had usually slept in an adjoining room while Lady Helena watched) it was with inconceivable delight that the latter found her skilful and attentive nursing extolled,

and heard Mr. S. and Dr. L. declare that if Lady Restormel lived, it would be owing to the excellence of the attendance which she received. 'But, surely, surely she will live!' cried the agitated girl. They would still only reply, 'we hope so, but this continued delirium under her circumstance is alarming!' In this state of anxiety and fear, slightly alleviated by glimmerings of hope, passed seven days and nights, during which Lady Helena took scarcely any rest but in the day. At length, on the night preceding that on which Lord Restormel could with any certainty be expected, the pulse fell, the head seemed clearer, the patient swallowed with less difficulty and more willingness, and when Dr.L. came in the morning, he pronounced the crisis to be over.

"Thank God!" cried Lady Helena, bursting into tears, "what good news for her son when he arrives, and surely now he must be very near if the letter reached him!"

"When he comes, if he loves his mother as much as he is said to do, so as to

see only through her eyes," replied Dr. L., "he ought to settle a pension for life on your Gibbs, who did all the night-nursing I find; what an accurate account she has kept of what was given, and so on; one would think no one but a person deeply interested could have taken such pains, and really, any negligence might in this case have been fatal; I shall take care to let Lord Restormel know this."

A sob so full of pleasure as to be intolerably painful for a moment now burst from the bosom of Lady Helena, and she was forced to leave the room.

"Well, then! I have been the means of saving her life—her's!—I, that odious Lady Helena Fortescue, whom she would not allow to approach her! What a secret, but precious consciousness shall I carry in my heart through life!—what pangs I have saved to Lord Rostormel!—what overpowering feelings I shall have when I see him!—but why, why is he not here?"

It was near noon before Lady Helena saw, from a gazebo in the park, a post-

chaise and four just appearing on the top of a hill, and driving at full speed. "It is he, no doubt!" she exclaimed, and hastened to meet him at the lodge-gate, to curtail his dreadful suspense by telling him his mother was declared to be better; and she very naturally concluded this assurance would be more satisfactory from her than any one else. That done, thought Lady Helena, to him, in future I shall resign my task of watching, and I shall also avoid meeting him in the day. I am sure Miss Brightwen, were she here, would say my determination to avoid him was strictly proper. Lady Restormel shall never have it in her power to saythat Lady Helena Fortescue took advantage of existing circumstances, and her helpless unconsciousness, to try to entrap the affections of her son.

While these thoughts were rapidly passing in Lady Helena's mind, the chaise almost as rapidly had reached the gate of the park, where Lady Helena was standing in a state of indescribable emotion. It contained Lord Restormel, who had tra-

velled day and night from Edinburgh on receipt of the letter; and now, worn out with anxiety and fatigue, had, with a beating heart and trembling frame, discovered the house where he might learn tidings which would convulse his soul with agony. At this moment he beheld Lady Helena, and saw she was pale and in tears. In an instant he was by her side, and grasped her hand, but could not say, 'How is she!' Lady Helena was silent too; but she smiled through her fast falling tears, and at length faltered out, "She is better."

"My God, I thank thee!" cried Lord Restormel, sobbing convulsively; when he recovered himself, he exclaimed--"How good it was of you to meet me! but in—in—" trying to help her into the chaise as he spoke.

Lady Helena, however, refused compliance; she said she wanted to walk, and begged him to proceed on his road without thinking of her. He obeyed in silence; but he was no sooner out of sight, than

Lady Helena thought she might as well have accompanied him. By not doing so, however, Lady Helena saved herself many a pang, as she did not witness Lord Restormel's heart-rending agony at finding that his mother did not know him, and had relapsed into that total unconsciousness so agonizing to the feelings of affection—that blindness to the form which it loves the best—that deafness to the voice which it once most delighted to hear, and that insensibility to the caresses of the apprehensive and anxious tenderness which challenges recognition and welcome—but challenges them in vain.

Such was the trial which awaited Lord Restormel on his arrival, and for which the agitated Lady Helena had omitted to prepare him. The consequence was, that overcome with misery, and previous fatigue, he fainted on the bed of his mother; and when conveyed to another chamber, Mr. S. insisted on his not leaving his bed again till he had had some hours of needful rest; and he obtained it, for how-

ever ill she was, he was assured the danger was over; and when Lady Helena quitted his mother's chamber, at dawn the next morning, she pushed a note under his door, which would, she trusted, meet his eye on waking, to let him know that she had slept during the night, and was certainly much better. Then Lady Helena went to her bed, and sweet were her slumbers. They also seemed very long to Lord Restormel, for he had hoped to see her before he took his breakfast in his mother's room; but he was told Lady Helena had a bad head-ache and was not up; nor did he see her through the course of the day—what could that mean? was it accident, or was it design? but that the next day would determine. To-morrow came, Lady Helena was gone out in the carriage; when dinner was served, he found he was to dine alone; Lady Helena had dined early.

"She avoids me I see," said he, deeply sighing, "and she is right perhaps; but I think she might as well have told me

herself, and not by her maid only, that I was to consider myself as master here, and order whatever I liked." At this moment when he had just sent away the nearly untasted meal, Lady Helena entered accompanied by Mrs. Magnal, whom she thought it right should be in the house with her, now Lord Restormel was come. Never before did Lady Helena pay such regard to propriety and the opinion of others; but she was not conscious of the power of that feeling gradually increasing in her heart, which taught her this lesson, and yet, had such attention to decorum been other than her own act and deed, had it been required of her, even by those whom she was most solicitous to please, she would have been impelled, probably, into a scornful disregard of it, and set the daring monitors at defiance. One day and night made now a striking improvement in the state of Lady Restormel's health; her delirium suddenly subsided, and she knew her son! what joy to the affectionate heart of Lord Restormel! what comfort to her

own! to see him whom she had thought far distant, watching with unwearied tenderness by her fevered and restless bed! but she was conscious that he had not always been her attendant, and that her nurses had been women; but one woman more especially haunted her recollection, who seemed to have been with her all night. Lord Restormel said her recollections were correct, and he had understood from Mr. S. and Dr. L. that they owed her unpayable obligations for her care and assiduity, as they had probably been the means of saving her valuable life.

"Unpayable!" said the proud invalid, "have we received unpayable obligations? I trust not, Restormel; but that we must think about hereafter. At present my first wish is to be removed hence as soon as possible, for I must have given great trouble, and where I wish to owe no favors."

"Yet, surely, you have received them here—surely Lady Helena has been kind."

"I have not seen her."

"Not seen her! how could that be?"

"Why to say the truth I refused to see her when first I came, and I am afraid in the hurry of my spirits then, I spoke harshly and repulsively while I so refused."

"But she was not conscious of that."

"Not that I know of—but I thought I saw a lady's figure reflected in the glass, which then suddenly disappeared, and perhaps the servants might repeat what I said, for certainly I have never received any such application since."

Lord Restomel was at first too much hurt to reply! Lady Helena, whose kind attentions were even full of ingenious contrivances for the comfort of the invalid, were, he found, the constant theme of praise with his mother's servants and her own! she, to have had her feelings wounded by being harshly refused his mother's admittance to her presence! the thought was insupportable! nor did she seem, as he ardently hoped to find her, kindly impressed any way towards Lady Helena—though to her alone, and her directing kindness, she must have been indebted for all the alleviations

of her situation! At length he said that, "no doubt Lady Helena had done her duty by the stranger so thrown on her care; no doubt she had seen that her servants had done theirs."

"Oh! I dare say she authorized all that was done; but the house-keeper here is a very clever woman I understand, and, Restormel, I cannot feel burthened with obligation to Lady Helena, or to any one for performing the common dues of hospitality, and for not turning out a poor woman hanging between life and death; I should have done as much for Lady Helena had she been overturned at my gate, and ill in consequence of it."

"No doubt," replied Lord Restormel; but he was grieved to see how little his mother's illness, and even her danger had tended to soften her dislike, and dislike of whom? a highly-gifted being whom she did not know—and in whom, after all, he was sure she feared her charms more than she disapproved her faults. But why did she fear her charms? and why did she dis-

like to know Lady Helena? was it not from apprehensive tenderness for him, and regard for his happiness? was it not because she was afraid that if he loved and married Lady Helena, she would not make him happy? Lord Restormel, as these questions occurred to him, felt his temporary indignation against his mother's prejudices entirely subside since love of him occasioned them; beside, how could he long resent any thing in that beloved parent whom he had so lately been on the point of losing.—Poor Julia, meanwhile, was beholding the latter end of her father, surely, but slowly approaching, and it was well for her affectionate nature that she was soothed and supported by the presence of the man she loved. At one time Sir George wished their union to take place immediately; but he suffered so much and grew so evidently worse, that he owned he was incapable of enjoying the consciousness even of their being united, and he did not wish the bridal hours of Julia to be clouded over by filial sorrow. But

the gloom of Marcus and Julia was cheered by the hopes they entertained that Lady Restormel's detention at Laurel Grove would produce an intimacy between the families, and bring about the union Marcus had so long desired between his friend and his sister; yet, even from them Lady Helena concealed the exertions she had made, and the claims she had in consequence on the love of Lady Restormel—and to the best of her belief, she had put it out of the power even of chance to reveal her secret to any one; and while she looked at her pale cheek and sunken eye, the result of her watchfulness, she felt a degree of triumph and of satisfactory consciousness which her beauty in all its splendor had never bestowed on her. Lady Restormel's own maid was now well enough to come to Laurel Grove; and when she arrived, her Lady declined all other attendance, besides that of her son. Lord Restormel, spite of himself, remained unsatisfied with his mother's feelings towards Lady Helena, and ventured to hope that she would request to

see her before she went away, in order to make her personal acknowledgments and apologies for the trouble given, and the accommodations received.

"Certainly, Lord Restormel," she proudly replied, "high-breeding and decorum require no less; but has Lady Helena asked you when we mean to go?"

He was glad that he was able to reply—"I never see Lady Helena! I have seen her only twice since I came."

"Amazing! how is this?"

"You must ask that of Lady Helena—whenever I have requested leave to pay my respects to her, the answer has been—'My Lady, sir, is gone out with Mrs. Magnal,' who has, you know, been staying here ever since I came; 'or my lady is too unwell to see you;' or 'Mrs. Magnal is unwell, and she cannot leave her;' then sometimes it is, 'but she hopes Lady Restormel continues to mend, and that your lordship and her ladyship have every thing you want.'"

"Very cold, and very correct, and very

civil, observed Lady Restormel thoughtfully."

"Very," he replied, in a tone of pique, and almost of sarcasm, "as much so, I think, as even your ladyship could require. Then, as I dine in compliance with your wishes, in your dressing-room, and breakfast also, I have no opportunity or chance of seeing Lady Helena at meals; but, I dare say, if I were to dine or breakfast below, she would be gone out with Mrs. Magnal, or her terrible headaches would be returned."

"You are piqued, Restormel!"

"I believe I am."

"You have no reason to be so, I suspect! indifference neither courts nor avoids any one."

"Do you think so?" he replied, his countenance lighting up with pleasure.

"But we avoid sometimes what we dislike, Restormel."

"But why should Lady Helena Fortescue dislike me?"

"You are my son."

"What then? she cannot be so unjust as to dislike me on your account, nor is she capable I am sure of disliking you; she cannot be so unjust as to hate any one she does not know, on the mere report of others."

"Restormel! that praise of Lady Helena was blame of me."

"Indeed, I did not mean to censure you; but if I am your son, I am also her brother's friend."

"Well, well! have it your own way," replied Lady Restormel pettishly, "and fancy she avoids you because you are too charming, and she is afraid of you; all I require of you is to avoid *her*, lest she should be too charming also—and let us get away from hence as fast as we can. I shall be able to go, I believe, the day after to-morrow; but I will not go till Lady Erpingham, who is, I understand, expected soon, arrives, as Lord Aston is better—and also some Miss Brightwen is coming home, who is, Warren tells me, a great favorite here; she was governess to Miss

Villeroy, and is now a something to Lady Helena, but what I cannot make out."

"A friend only, I believe, and a woman of rare qualities; she was a blessing indeed to poor Miss Villeroy, and formed her heart to excellence, and her manners to gentleness and propriety."

"She is come then, I hope, to form Lady Helena's manners to the same. I wonder whether she will ever succeed!"

"Your ladyship called Lady Helena coldly correct just now—could Miss Brightwen have taught her more propriety than she has displayed?"

"I dare say Miss Brightwen did teach it—I dare say it was not self-taught!"

Lord Restormel was about to reply with some severity, when the sight of his mother's pallid cheek and emaciated form disarmed him, and he turned away in silence. Lady Helena was now informed by Lady Erpingham that she would be at Laurel Grove in two days time, when she hoped to take on herself the welcome task of doing the honors of her house to

her old acquaintance, and making herself amends for her enforced absence at a time of such interest. Miss Brightwen announced her return for the same day. Lady Restormel desired Lady Helena to be informed, that, though able to go away before her mother arrived, she should make a point of staying to thank Lady Erpingham in person for the hospitality and kindness she had received under her roof. This message appeared to Lady Helena to imply that Lady Restormel was still resolved not to see her if she could possibly avoid it, and meant to pay all her acknowledgments to her mother; and she was still more pleased that she had made Mrs. Magnal promise to take her home with her as soon as she had seen Miss Brightwen, who was expected at an early hour; she also insisted on setting off before her mother arrived, in order to avoid questions and explanations between Lady Erpingham and herself, which it would be difficult to answer. Mrs. Magnal who resented Lady Restormel's not desiring to see her young friend,

the very instant she was able to see and know any one, thought she only acted with proper spirit in leaving the house, as its real mistress was expected and she could do so with propriety. Sophia arrived by an early stage, and in deep mourning for her sister, who, having survived all her children, and being married to a man unworthy of her, had long found life a burden, and felt death a relief. Her affectionate sister, therefore, was at once afflicted and comforted, when she committed her to her grave and to her God. Sophia was shocked when she saw Lady Helena's changed appearance, and evidently languid frame. The frequent head-aches which had offended Lord Restormel's pride, were realities, not pretences ; for, with all her heroism, and the support which her pride afforded her, Lady Helena's feelings were wounded—she felt herself injuriously treated by a woman whom she knew that she had not only never injured, but greatly served. True Lady Restormel knew not all she had done for her, but

she knew that she was the temporary mistress of the house in which she had been so kindly treated; and then, instead of an earnest desire to thank her in person, to receive a message importing that she wished to stay to thank Lady Erpingham, without naming herself!—this was such treatment as the petted girl, the beloved and spoiled of all hearts, as Marcus called her, knew not how to bear, and yet vainly tried to rise above.

"What can I have done! in what light can I appear to the world and to Lady Restormel, that I am thus judged unworthy to be admitted into the presence of this severe woman, even when she must consider herself as indebted to my courtesy? have what are called my eccentricities done this? and what then? what right has she to punish them? and then, to think that this is Lord Restormel's mother!" Such were the hourly cogitations of Lady Helena; and, alas, she was well aware that the greatest sting of all was, that the person who thus wounded

her was Lord Restormel's mother! At that idea tears deluged her pale cheek, and that cheek became still paler. To Sophia she unburthened her full heart, in some degree, and owned, indisposition alone had not casued the change she saw.

"But you have a tired, fatigued look, Lady Helena, and as if you had not had your usual quantity of rest lately."

"Can an uneasy and a mortified spirit rest?" was the evasive reply. "I go to my bed now even earlier than my usual time, but I own it is not to sleep there. However, I am going away not to return till the Restormels are gone, and when they are off the premises, perhaps I shall rally again—till then, God bless you!"

Mrs. Magnal staid some minutes after Lady Helena was in the carriage, to tell Sophia how much she abominated Lady Restormel's strange want of propriety in not desiring to see and thank Lady Helena, and how much she admired her

young friend's spirit; she then drove off, and, as she put her head out to give Sophia another nod, she saw Lady Restormel, whom the sound of a carriage had drawn to the window, and who bowed to the old lady, recognizing her as having seen her once at a party in London—but she haughtily drew back and would not return the salutation. At this moment Lord Restormel, who had vainly endeavoured to get to the door time enough to hand the ladies into the carriage, was looking at Mrs. Magnal, and saw the angry, disdainful expression of her face, as her eyes were raised to his mother's window, and he was so confounded by it, that he omitted to request the postilion to stop, as was his intention, that he might speak to Lady Helena; in another moment they were out of sight. He, therefore, entered his mother's room in no pleasant frame of mind, for he was going to leave Laurel Grove immediately, that he might see every thing prepared for his mother's accommodation on the road, and

also at home; and he wished to have had some communication with Lady Helena before he set off; nor was disappointment his only feeling, he feared that Lady Helena was gone away from a determination to avoid an interview with his mother, whose conduct she had so much reason to resent; and this fear was confirmed by the look which Mrs. Magnal had directed to his mother's apartment, at the window of which he now saw that she herself was standing.

"That impertinent old lady would not return my bow, Charles!" cried Lady Restormel as he entered, "what could she mean by it? and who is the lady with her? she is a fine, elegant figure?"

"It was Lady Helena Fortescue," replied Lord Restormel.

"Lady Helena! and gone out, though her friend is just come, her mother coming, and I am going away! How strange! but I suppose she is only gone out for a drive."

"I conclude, madam, that you do not

think it was necessary for Lady Helena to stay in order to take leave of you."

"No, sir, I do not—still I assure you I was just going to request the honor of waiting on her."

"Indeed! then I am sorry she is gone!"

"So am I, especially as I suspect from Mrs. Magnal's marked slight to you just now, as if she resented something, that Lady Helena has left the house to avoid seeing us, and will not return till we are gone."

"I hope you are mistaken," replied Lady Restormel, "I should be really sorry to have offended Lady Helena, and still more to have compromised my character for good-breeding; but what business has Mrs. Magnal to resent Lady Helena's supposed injuries?"

"None but what affection gives. She loves Lady Helena, I suppose, and I believe all who know her love her."

"Again! a bye blow at me, my lord, and Lady Helena the cause of it? that is not the way to make me love her, Restormel!"

"But I only want you to do her justice."

"Your seeming to do her more than justice is not the way to make me do that."

"Well, well, let us drop the subject! I shall enquire whether Lady Helena is expected back; if she be, I shall wait her return."

He left the room, but re-entered immediately, saying, that Lady Helena was gone to stay at Mrs. Magnal's; he then immediately ordered his horses, declaring his intention of waiting on Lady Erpingham and Lady Helena, when he had seen his mother settled in her own house again.

"Be it so;" Lady Restormel coldly replied, "but in the meanwhile let us fulfil still nearer duties. I must see and reward the servants who waited on me, particularly that young woman who sat up with me, and to whom I owe, I believe, what money cannot pay; however, I must do all it can do."

"I have already seen her, and paid

her, and thanked her, and blessed her for myself."

"But that is not enough, I must see her and do the same. Let her be desired to attend me—nay I wish to see both my attendants and the house-keeper also; the other servants you will remunerate for me."

Lord Restormel then took leave of his mother, and having imparted her wishes to the groom of the chambers, he begged permission to see Miss Brightwen, who as much in her heart desired to see him, and was very glad to receive his visit. When strangers meet with a prepossession in each other's favor, it is rarely that they are dissatisfied with the interview; and Miss Brightwen and Lord Restormel parted with feelings of mutual admiration and good will. The former, too, was pleased at being charged with such heartfelt and gratifying regrets, and acknowledgments to Lady Helena, and still more so at the faltering voice and blushing cheek with which they were uttered.

CHAP. XIII.

Lord Restormel was scarcely gone, when, according to her request, the female servants waited on his mother. The housekeeper was thanked and remunerated first, and then took her leave.

"To one of you," said Lady Restormel, to those who remained, "I am told that I owe obligations which no money can repay, for that, to your skilful care and attentions, I probably owe my life—therefore, I wish to give you more than money now, and thanks; I wish to tell you that if at any future time you want a friend to settle you in the world, or serve you in any way, I will be that friend. It is you Mrs. Gibbs I think to whom I am more particularly indebted."

"Oh! my lady," she replied, with some embarrassment, "you owe me very little, and his lordship has done so hand-

somely by me, I cannot think of having any thing more."

"My son has done his part, but I must do mine now—I must not, cannot die in any one's debt." As Lady Restormel said this, she approached Mrs. Gibbs, and taking her hand, looked kindly in her face—"How strange this is!" cried she, "I was so sure your eyes were dark, large and dark, and I see they are neither. But your fellow-servant's are dark—surely it was she then who sat up with me?"

"No, indeed, my lady, it was not me, I can assure you!"

"No, my nurse seemed very tall. How delirium must change objects!" continued Lady Restormel, still fixing her eyes on the conscious Gibbs, who shrunk from her earnest gaze—"and beautify also—for so beautiful did my night nurse appear to me that I fancied my poor Warren was dead, and that her spirit came to attend on me, arrayed in heavenly beauty! and then, the tones of her voice were so sweet, and her white hands so soft! and

she raised me in her arms so gently, yet so powerful! I shall never forget it;—it was quite soothing, quite delightful sometimes! and I thought how merciful heaven was to let her come to watch over me!" As Lady Restormel spoke, her voice faltered! she continued, "I can never pay the value of the feelings I then had while enjoying that pleasing delusion; but what I can do I will." Here she put notes in the hand of the under-servant, but a pocket-book in that of Mrs. Gibbs, which she would fain have returned, but Lady Restormel grasped her hand to hold it there, and started on feeling that one of her fingers was bent, and all were large and bony.—"This is very strange!" she cried—"but then, so are delirious fancies! In my wanderings you seemed so much, so very much younger, and so very much taller than you are, and then your hands were so handsome, so soft!"

"Oh! as for the hands—Yes my lady," replied Mrs. Gibbs rather pettishly, who prided herself on her youth, and the

elegance of her figure; "but, indeed, my young lady is not so much younger and taller than I am!"

"Your young lady!" exclaimed Lady Restormel—"what has she to do with this business?—I was not talking of her!"

"No, to be sure, my lady," answered Gibbs, blushing and trembling—"oh, no, nothing, only I thought——." Here her fellow-servant gave her a look of great meaning, which did not escape the penetrating eye of Lady Restormel; and seeing that both the servants were going towards the door, she seized an arm of both, and commanded them to stop, saying—

"There is something which I do not comprehend—are you, or are you not the persons who sat up with me?"

"No, my lady, not I," said the under-servant, "but it was Mrs. Gibbs here."

"Let Mrs. Gibbs answer for herself—was it you then?"

"To be sure, my lady," she replied,

turning now red, and now pale—" who should it be if *not* me?—but pray take back the book, I really cannot take it after this, as you doubt who I was."

" Have I not reason to doubt? Good heaven! could it be? was it possible?" Here she gazed earnestly on Gibbs again, turned her round, examined her hands again, and then desired her to speak as softly as she used to do.

" I, I cannot speak softly, my lady, indeed I cannot."

" No! nor your voice is not that which still dwells on my ear; I am now convinced it is not, but then who was it? answer me woman," she cried, grasping Gibbs's arm as she spoke, " are you not an impostor?"

" Impostor! my lady, not I, I would not have taken a farthing of you."

" And wherefore not, if you deserved it; but did you deserve it? did that girl deserve it?"

" Oh, yes, my lady, that is, I am sure I was with you in the day."

"But was Mrs. Gibbs with me in the night?"

"To be sure she was—who should it be else?"

"That is what I want to know; but I know it was not you Mrs. Gibbs, your cheek and manner give the lie to your words."

"Lie! my lady! I am sure I am no liar."

"Come then! here is a Bible, will you swear that you nursed me during every night?"

"No, my lady, not, not every night, and all night; I cannot swear that, but I will swear that—" here the other servant caught her arm, as if apprehensive that she was going to perjure herself, and Gibbs paused.

"What will you swear? will you swear that the being who did watch by me all and every night, (and scarcely could Lady Restormel now find power of utterance) was not your young lady?"

"No, n-n-o my lady, I cannot swear again, I have sworn not to— I will not

perjure myself, my lady—we are both sworn already my lady, and my young lady would be so angry!"

"Oh, yes, my lady."

"Then! it was Lady Helena Fortescue who—"

"I am sure I did not tell you so my lady, you cannot say that I am sure, I have not perjured myself."

"No, nor I neither!"

"So then! it was she herself; and then, she swore you to secresy!"

"Swore! yes; that is! oh! no!"

"Leave me!" cried Lady Restormel—"go!" then throwing herself back in her chair, she gave way to emotions so violent that they almost shook her yet weak frame to dissolution—"Generous! noble-minded girl!" was all she could articulate, when she recovered herself, "and this is she whom I reviled—I slighted; I! oh! insupportable! and then to go away lest I should see and recognize her, and find out the secret. But perhaps it is not an absolute secret; perhaps she told it to others—

told what I owe her; I wish I could find out. I will question her mother when she comes however, at all events. I owe her obligations so great, as to be painful—overwhelming!"

Thus felt, thus spoke Lady Restormel, as she lay across her bed almost suffocated with contending feelings; and from this state she had scarcely recovered, when she was told that Lady Erpingham was arrived, and begged to see her.

"Admit her instantly! was her eager reply. The greeting of the two ladies was affectionate, and on Lady Restormel's side full of tears; but even emotion could not long prevent Lady Restormel from speaking on the subject now nearest her heart.—"Yes!" cried she, "I have received such kindness here, as I feel I can never repay; but Lady Helena has used me cruelly."

"Impossible! it is not in her nature."

"Yes, it is; after loading me with obligations, she went away to avoid my thanks, or from some other motive."

"Well, I own I was quite surprised not to find her here."

"But why did she go? cannot you guess?"

"Not I!"

"But do you not know that Lady Helena condescended to nurse me during the night? that her care and attention saved my life, and that then she swore the servants to secresy?"—here Lady Restormel burst into tears.

"No, I did not know it—but I can believe it; it was so like Helena! and yet, to risk her precious life! but that was so like Helena also! aye, and then to conceal what she had done!"

"But are you sure she told no one?"

"I dare say not, except it was Miss Brightwen."

"May I see and interrogate Miss Brightwen?"

"Certainly!"

"And may I see her alone?"

"If you desire it; Helena might tell her what she would not tell me, for she would know how the idea of the danger she had incurred would terrify me, even

when I saw her safe and well.—But is she so, for I hear she looks dreadfully."

"God forbid!" cried Lady Restormel, clasping her hands convulsively together. Sophia now sent word that she was ready to attend Lady Restormel's summons, and Lady Erpingham having staid to present her to her guest, left them together.

As soon as Lady Restormel put the intended questions to Miss Brightwen, her surprised and delighted countenance answered them sufficiently even before she exclaimed—"Is it possible? dear, admirable Lady Helena!"

"Then she never told you of her kindness?"

"Certainly not; though I was with her an hour, at least, this morning, before her departure, and expressed the surprise and anxiety which her sickly, tired look occasioned me."

"Sickly! oh do not tell me she is sick, and I the cause! oh, how my heart reproaches me! but now, Miss Bright-

wen, I would fain presume to question you on another subject; can you, and will you, tell me all you know of the length and extent of my son's acquaintance with Lady Helena ?"

Sophia paused for a few moments, but hating concealment, and ever consistent with herself, she resolved to reveal all that ever passed between Lord Restormel, and her young and noble friend; of the journey up to London together, and all that happened on the road, she now gave an accurate account, and also of the conversation in Gloucester-place afterwards, when he called on Lady Helena with her brother, and when he called on Miss Villeroy; and she did this, because she wished Lady Restormel to see and know that her son had evidently declined to pursue his means of forming an intimacy with Lady Helena, spite of his admiration of her, from deference for his mother's opinion, and regard for her happiness; and that Lady Helena had followed his lead, and even at the risk of appearing rude and

inhospitable, had avoided his presence while under her own roof.

"If," thought Sophia, "this woman is of the noble and generous nature which her countenance speaks her to be, she will, especially after Lady Helena's conduct, be impressed by this narration in the manner I wish, and good must be the result."

But whatever Lady Restormel felt or thought, she said little; she only listened in tearful silence, and shook her head when Sophia related the scene in the stage coach. Still, after a silence of strong emotion, Lady Restormel suddenly exclaimed—

"Then you think no one, except the servants, knows that Lady Helena sat up with me, and they necessarily knew it; what, not even Miss Villeroy and Captain Fortescue!"

The quick-sighted Sophia instantly saw the distrust, the suspicion prevailing in Lady Restormel's mind; she discovered that she suspected Lady Helena of

having only acted a part, and of having given herself the appearance of concealing her kindness, well knowing all the time that she had put it in the power of some one to disclose her generosity, and be the means of gratifying her vanity, and probably her affection. With the blush and tone of indignant feeling, Sophia, therefore, instantly replied—

"From what I know of the generous, honest nature of Lady Helena, madam, I assert that she is incapable of meanness or artifice."

"Did I accuse her of either?"

"No, not directly, but I saw what was passing in your ladyship's mind, and to that I reply. Chance has put it in my power to do more—to destroy or confirm your suspicions directly."

"What can you mean?" cried Lady Restormel, too conscientious to say that she had no suspicions.

"Lady Helena desired me to read if I chose, and then to add to a letter which she had been writing to Miss Villeroy. I have

not yet even looked for this letter, but it is in her writing-desk; with your ladyship's leave I will send for the desk here."

She did so; and having herself perused it first, she gave it to Lady Restormel with triumph beaming in her tearful eyes.

"But let me make one request, madam," she said. "Read the beginning of the letter, which cannot interest you, as well as the end, which must."

"Why so?"

"Because they both equally develope the character and mind of Lady Helena. The first will show you, I trust, that her nobleness of nature is above the artifice with which, excuse me, I saw that you were inclined to charge it."

Lady Restormel was a proud woman, proud of her high birth, proud of her rank, proud of her intellectual superiority, and also of that lofty deportment, that dignity which had so often awed her inferiors, and even her equals, into distant respect and flattering fearful deference.

But there is something in the fearless firmness of a mind confident, from the consciousness of rectitude, and in the bold frankness, the unshrinking dignity of a being whose consequence is derived from mental powers and unblemished virtue alone, which excites, in even pride, however great, a respect and admiration equal to what it claims itself on clearer grounds, in the eyes of vulgar judges ; and while Miss Brightwen thus dared to read her inmost thoughts, to reply to those thoughts, and to defend with the voice of truth that noble creature whom she saw unjustly accused, Lady Restormel felt awed by a spirit as undaunted as her own, and wondered how the governess of Miss Villeroy could acquire such an influence over her. Lady Restormel took the offered letter, and mildly expressed her readiness to do what Miss Brightwen desired. The letter was as follows :—

" You and Marcus need not be anxious concerning the state of my health. Fever has certainly been in the house, but

I caught it not; and when Lord and Lady Restormel are gone, who, I must own, affected me with a sort of disagreeable influenza, I shall be very well, I dare say, and regain my roses and my sauciness. At present, I own that the anxiety I felt when my poor guest was in danger, the terror lest any thing should be omitted which was of consequence to her recovery, and another painful consciousness, have made me look the colour of a melting cream cheese; and my pleasantry is like that of a beaten child, who pretends to laugh, and says 'I do not care,' but the laugh ends in a sob. I wish that dear, kind, busy being, Mrs. Magnal, had not written to Marcus; but she is so loving, and fancies that I have lately been acting from attachment and preference to her and her society, when, in reality, wounded conscience prompted my first attentions, and necessity my latter ones. I thought that I was rude, and had hurt their feelings by going off after you, Julia, when she and her Heronimus were staying at our house;

therefore, you know, I volunteered a visit to them on my return, and I invited her to stay with me when Lord Restormel came, from a sense of propriety, and because there was no one else at hand. But, alas! the deceived Mrs. Magnal fancies she is my dearest friend, and I feel my sense of integrity wounded by the grateful tenderness which she, in fancied return for mine, bestows on me. Yet how can I undeceive her? for surely my strict love for truth will not authorize me to wound her feelings, by telling her she is certainly only third or fourth best at most in my list of the beloved,—what think you, my dear Julia! still I fear I must undeceive her, and quarrel with her at all risks, for she has hinted to me, and pretty broadly too, that as she has no children, and Mr. Magnal is very rich, she shall leave me a handsome sum when she dies, if he survives her, and all her fortune at his death, as she dislikes her own relations. Now, this must not—shall not be. I have a horror of all dislikes, and still greater of vindictive hatred to relations carried beyond the grave,

and thence, in my opinion, fixing the condemnation of the dying, as no one can deserve to be forgiven who does not forgive. Therefore, I shall try to reconcile her to those relations; but should I fail, I will not be her heir, for rather than be so, I will erect an every day or a Sunday-school in her parish, and write a pamphlet in praise of educating the poor; and I will write another to make it appear that the sixth Heronimus Magnal from the present was not born in wedlock, and that the preux chevalier, whose valour shed such lustre on their race, was said, from undoubted authority, to have died of a wound received in his back. But why should I, even in confidence to you, presume to ridicule the weaknesses of these excellent people? Let me look at home! Oh, the mote and the beam! However, in all seriousness I say, that I must quarrel with them, if they persist in considering me as the heiress of one of them."

Here Lady Restormel ceased to read, and with some coldness said—

"Miss Brightwen, I own that what I

have hitherto read does honor to Lady Helena, and establishes her claim to be considered ingenuous; but if there be nothing more to the present purpose, I—"

"If your ladyship goes on," hastily interrupted Sophia, "you will find much to the point in question, and perhaps I ought to solicit your pardon for the liberty Lady Helena gives herself in speaking of you."

Lady Restormel did not answer, but while a deep blush overspread her cheek, she resumed her perusal of the letter.

"But though I have not vowed eternal friendship to good Mrs. Magnal, I own that my intimacy with her is increased, and is increasing in a marvellous degree, because she enters so warmly into my wrongs and my resentments—or rather I should say her resentments are strong, on account of my wrongs, and it is very certain that intimacies which are founded on the indulgence of the angry passions, are, while they last, (but that is not long, as their foundation is but a sandy one) as violent, or more so than any other; and she is

so angry with Lady Restormel for her conduct to me! To be sure it would have been more dignified in me to have kept silent with regard to the affront she passed on me in the presence of the surgeon, Mr. S., and my own and her servants, in refusing to see me, and I was willing to impute it to the as yet undiscovered powers of delirium; but, my heart was burthened, and I had no one to unload it to but Mrs. Magnal, who entered deeply into my wrongs, but who, like myself, was willing to hope that what she said was the result of illness; but when she recovered her senses we both expected that she would have sent some kind message to me, wishing then to see me, or expressing her regret that she could not yet bear to receive me. Mrs. Magnal, therefore, was indignant when she found that I was still unnoticed, though my servants had well performed their duty by her, and though the medical men had declared when they heard Gibbs had attended on her night and day, that

she owed her life to her exertions—exertions which I certainly must have commanded. Indeed, she was so angry that I believe if she had not recollected that I, like Mrs. Malaprop, pique myself on my parts of speech, she would have exclaimed, 'this comes of her reading and writing—an excuse for my poor friend's errors, which certainly no one would even think of making.'"

"I believe, madam," said Sophia, casting her eye over the letter, "that you have now read enough to shew you that neither Miss Villeroy nor Captain Fortescue are in Lady Helena's secret, and therefore you need not read any more."

"I shall certainly read the whole now, as you thought proper to give it to me for that purpose," replied Lady Restormel, in a tone of pique, "though it is very certain that Lady Helena when she wrote it little thought it would ever meet my eye." Sophia bowed and sat watching with no small emotion what effect the rest of the letter would have on her companion.

"Mrs. Magnal wonders," continued Lady Helena, "why Lady Restormel should be so prejudiced against me—but I do not: I know I have often done foolish eccentric things, and these things may have been related with exaggerations to Lady Restormel; but I do wonder that a lady whom I never offended, a lady who does not know me even personally, should condescend to lend herself so much as I find she has done to the malice and gossip of others, as to propagate idle stories against me, and taking it for granted that all she has heard of me is true, should, under my own roof, refuse to admit me into her presence, as if I were unworthy of her acquaintance, an outrage I could scarcely have believed possible, had not my own ears witnessed it!"

Here, darting an angry look at Miss Brightwen, Lady Restormel rushed into her own room in evident agitation, not choosing to have a witness of her emotion while she read what followed.

"Proud! injurious woman! but how did

he who loves not the proud of heart, humble and bring her down, even in that moment of arrogance and assumed superiority! for he threw her, for the necessary assistance and the offices of kindness, on the mercy of that being, on whom she had had no mercy! and Helena Fortescue was chosen to act the part of the good Samaritan to her severe, unindulgent censor! Julia! what a lesson to my own pride, and to my own arrogance and loftiness of spirit was this humbling of her's! To see that high-born and high-gifted woman, who held her head so loftily, thankfully to have that head repose on the bosom of a stranger, and indebted for her comfort to the attentions of menials! To see her helpless and dependent, and all her infirmities of body and of mind exhibited to the vulgar gaze and comment of inferiors, and hear her, the intellectual and the eloquent, as I passed the door of her apartment, uttering the ravings of a distempered fancy, and exhibiting weakness, which, while in possession of her reason, she would have con-

cealed if possible, even from herself! To fear that she who had been so unindulgent to my failings was now probably about to answer for her own! Oh! Julia, while I heard this, I felt the emptiness of all worldly pride, the presumption of all who censure the errors of others, and fancy they alone are the wise and the discreet; and while I raised my hands in heart-felt supplication for her, I also breathed a prayer for myself, that I might never forget the lesson taught me by the humbling of that haughty and distinguished woman; and that I might henceforward go on my way corrected, warned, and improved. But spite of the deep impression which, as you see, Lady Restormel's conduct has made on me, I still am happier on reflection than I ever was before! I feel that I have performed a Christian's duty towards her, and that though she dispises, she ought to love me. I have also great pleasure in recollecting the conduct of her admirable son—and mine to him. He sought me to express his thanks, but I

avoided him and them. I took no advantage of the mother's unconscious state to inveigle, as she would have called it, the affections of the son, though sure that he shares not her dislike of me. Dear, dear Restormel! Julia, forgive the boast, but I feel that I now have reason to be proud; surely he must have blamed Lady Restormel for not asking to see me; perhaps she meant to see me to-day before she left the house, therefore, I am going home with Mrs. Magnal to avoid the interview. I never would have seen her, I had as strong reasons to avoid her, as she could have to avoid me, and I should always have contrived to be ready with an excuse for not seeing her, still I wish she had desired to see me! yet it is very weak in me to feel thus. I resume my pen to tell you that I fear I must put a stop to my intimacy with the Magnals. Lord Clanross called just now on Mrs. Magnal, and as the Magnals patronize his evident devotion to me, they are always contriving means to throw him in my way. Methinks I see your

surprise, to hear that your lover has so soon recovered his disappointment; but I always knew Clanross would never take any harm from love; I caused him to transfer his love to me by listening patiently to his love for you, and pitying its hopelessness; and, when I discovered the harm my pity had done, and that the balsam I gave had cured one complaint, but made another, I should have taken the first opportunity of saying no, and all would have been well; but these good people will not let the youth disclose his love yet, but advise him to try the effect of time and assiduity; in the meanwhile they beset me with praises of the boy and his riches: I really thought they valued me at a higher rate than to deem such a fickle creature worthy of me, a boy whose heart, young as it is, is already full of the marks of images effaced—like the drawing-board of a school girl; I could never like such a man as that! I value not the passion that can be drawn on and off like a glove, which made of a certain sort

of leather, can be stretched to suit all sizes and shapes—no, no, Lord Clanross avaunt! and ye also, ye Magnals, if you try to force him upon me. Probably I shall never marry; I would not marry a man who could not love and marry me with all my faults, and I fear that with all my faults, love and marry me no man will. Hark, I hear a carriage! it is our dear Miss Brightwen! Now then for an hour's conversation with her, and then have with you Mrs. Magnal, and farewell to Laurel Grove till to-morrow.

Your own Helena F——.

It was with swelled, flushed cheeks and eyes, disfigured with weeping, that Lady Restormel returned to the anxious Sophia. "Miss Brightwen," said she, taking her hand, "I thank you! you have administered a powerful and trying medicine to me, but it has, I humbly hope, done me good. I have now a favor to ask of you—I would not on any account burthen these poor women's consciences with the idea of having perjured themselves, but I earnestly

wish, telling them at the same time that you know Lady Helena was my chief nurse, that you would draw from them some particulars of what passed." Miss Brightwen promised compliance and went in search of Gibbs and the other servant; she found them in great distress of mind, from the terror of having violated their oath; but she contrived means to quiet their fears and convince them that they had not betrayed the secret; and then she gained from them many interesting details, which she hastened to disclose to Lady Restormel and Lady Erpingham. Gibbs, who lay in the next room, had often heard Lady Helena praying by the bed of the sufferer; had also gone in and seen her lying with her head on the bosom of Lady Helena, as she lay on the bed beside her, and she owned she had often said to herself, 'how can my lady be so good to that cross woman who seemed so queer about seeing her when she first came.' Sophia related all she heard with great accuracy, and while Lady Erpingham wept

the sweetest maternal tears over the evidences of her child's worth, Lady Restormel's tears also flowed, but in bitterness as well as thankfulness.

"I thought so!" said she; "I thought my recollection was not a deceitful one! I remember to have seen that graceful being on her knees, her arms raised, and her beautiful hands clasped, while that sweet voice murmured out prayers for me! and well do I remember how pleasant it was to me to be supported on her bosom, while I often fancied her long, full sleeves were her wings that overshadowed me! but, I must go—I can stay here no longer now—Restormel will be uneasy if I am late when he expects me; but I shall not be happy till I return again, and have seen and blessed Lady Helena!" Lady Restormel then took an affectionate leave of the countess—and kissing Sophia's cheek, said—"I never before, on so short an acquaintance, left any one with such sentiments of respect and esteem as I do you Miss Brightwen, and I earnestly hope we

shall meet again, and often." As soon as Lady Restormel was at the gates of the park, she desired to know of the keeper of the gate where Mr. Magnal lived, and how far his house was out of her road. She was told it was full ten miles round.

"No matter," said she, "drive to Mr. Magnal's."

"Dear, my lady!" cried Warren, "surely it will fatigue you to go such around!"

"My mind will be more fatigued if I do not go, and will wear out my strength more."

When the postilions drove into Mr. Magnal's park, and approached the house, Lady Restormel was very near fainting, and almost gasped for breath. It so happened that Lady Helena was in the hall waiting for the carriage to drive up, which was to take her to make a call in the neighbourhood, therefore, on hearing the sound of wheels, she ran to the door, and consequently could not be denied, else, Lady Restormel might have been disappointed in the object of her visit.

" There is Lady Helena at the door, my lady," cried Warren. Lady Restormel instantly looked out of the window, and clasping her hands convulsively, as she gazed on that pale, but lively face, she exclaimed—" Yes, yes 'tis she !" but she saw with pain—that Lady Helena's impulse on recognizing the liveries was to hasten back into the house.

" Tell Lady Helena Fortescue," said Lady Restormel, in a faltering voice, " that my business is with her, and I intreat to see her alone." To retreat, and to deny the request were impossible ; therefore, Lady Helena full of wonder and alarm, came forward, and as Lady Restormel alighted, and was supported under both arms into the hall, she curtsied in dignified silence, and led the way into a room, in which was a couch—to which she pointed, as desiring that Lady Restormel should be conducted to it. During this time she felt herself confused and embarressed by the earnest gaze of Lady Restormel's expressive eyes, which were swim-

ming in tears, and when the servants left the room, it was with a beating heart that Lady Helena awaited Lady Restormel's communications; but finding that she remained silent as if expecting her to speak first, and knowing that her voice could not betray her more than her appearance must already have done, if Lady Restormel's memory retained any of the impressions made during her delirium, she ventured to say—"I await the honor of your ladyship's commands."

"Oh! that voice!" cried Lady Restormel, rising and attempting to approach Lady Helena, but her strength failed her, and she would have fallen to the ground had not Lady Helena caught her by the arm, and assisted her to the couch again. She would then have retreated, but Lady Restormel threw her arm round her, and as she held her, she exclaimed in a voice broken by sobs, "nearer! nearer yet!" then straining her forcibly to her bosom, she imprinted a kiss on her reluctant cheek. Lady Helena now still more surprized

and alarmed, struggled in her grasp, exclaiming—"Your ladyship is ill again! I am sure you are ill!"

"Unkind Lady Helena!" replied Lady Restormel! I understand the reproach; you believe that I must be delirious so to caress Lady Helena Fortescue! but have I sinned beyond forgiveness? Oh! if I thought it right to kneel to any one but my God! I would so humble myself before you Lady Helena! but believe me, I am humbled enough in spirit, and I conjure you not to reject the tribute I thus render to your excelling worth, and the proof I now give you of my deep and grateful sense of it!"

By these words, inarticulate nearly with emotion, yet full of the touching eloquence of the awakened heart, Lady Helena could not remain unsubdued, but throwing herself into the arms of Lady Restormel, she wept there some moments in silence: then recovering herself, she exclaimed—"But what does this mean! and what has thus affected you?"

"Do you not suspect that your secret is known?"

"What! have those women betrayed me?"

"Yes, but not voluntarily; my suspicions were awakened, I saw in neither of them the angel whom I had seen in my delirious hours, and I questioned them till my suspicions became certainties; therefore I could not rest till I had expressed to you in words the gratitude which can end only with my life."

Lady Helena had fancied herself sufficiently rewarded before, for the labour of love, which she had performed to one who deserved it not from her, in the approbation of her own heart; but the gratification, which she was now experiencing, was infinitely greater, and she listened to the grateful and touching eloquence of her noble visitor, with her head leaning against her shoulder, and tears of pleasing emotion trickling down her cheeks. At this moment Mrs. Magnal entered the room, who, having seen with astonishment the Restormel liveries at their door, could not rest

till she had learnt why her house was troubled with a guest so hateful and so unwelcome; nor was she more disposed to perform the dues of hospitality when she saw Lady Helena pale and in tears, leaning, as if for support, against Lady Restormel. "Grant me patience," cried she; "what does this mean, and what could your ladyship mean by coming hither to afflict that dear girl—what have you been saying to her?"

"What has made me very happy," said Lady Helena, smiling through her tears, while Lady Restormel was endeavouring to rise, in courtesy to the lady of the house, but finding that her limbs trembled under her, she reseated herself, saying, "Excuse me, madam, I cannot stand; but, as I see that I am an unwelcome guest, I will only indulge myself with a few more words with your young friend here, and then take my departure."

"But may I venture to ask why your ladyship came at all?"

"To pay a debt of heartfelt gratitude, as far as words can pay it—a debt which I was not conscious of till a few hours ago."

"No; you knew you had been the guest of Lady Helena, I conclude, and—"

"I knew," interrupted Lady Restormel, "that I was indebted for the common dues of hospitality, but not for benevolence so exalted, and services so vast."

"Dear, dear madam, forbear," cried Lady Helena.

Mrs. Magnal looked at them both in bewildered silence and amazement.

"I see," said Lady Restormel, smiling, "that I have to tell you all Lady Helena did for me;" and having done so, Mrs. Magnal exclaimed—"Well, was ever the like of that heard—come hither to thank and bless Lady Helena—no wonder indeed; your ladyship ought to fall down on your knees and kiss the very ground she treads upon; but, my dear girl, how could you be so mad and so desperate as to risk

your own precious life, and go through so much, and all for what and for whom—not for a friend but an enemy; what could Lady Restormel be to you—what could you care for her, and you could not have done more for your own darling mother; what could your motive be?"

A burning blush now dyed the cheek of Lady Helena. Such is, I fear, the obliquity of human nature, that Lady Restormel beheld what she considered as a tell-tale blush with great satisfaction, because it lowered her sense of obligation to Lady Helena, and made her suspect that it was secret attachment to the son which had impelled her services to the mother.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Magnal," replied Lady Helena, rather indignantly, "that you are surprised at finding me capable of doing good offices towards an enemy, which is a duty expressly enjoined us; but I beg you to forget that this lady ever was ought but my kind friend, as I see that she now is."

"And ought to be; nay, ought always to have been, in my opinion."

"And always will be her faithful, her devoted friend," said Lady Restormel, embracing Lady Helena; "and now I must take my leave, or poor Restormel will be uneasy; but whatever anxiety my delay will occasion him, it will be all made amends for and forgotten when he learns the cause of it. Oh, Lady Helena, that you would but accompany me home," she continued, in the kindest and most caressing manner; "what say you—remember that I may relapse, and then how I shall want and miss my nurse—do, do go with me, I long to open my house to you, as I have done my heart."

"I am grateful to you for the proposal and the wish," replied Lady Helena, blushing, "but it is impossible for me to comply with it."

"Comply with it—no, to be sure not," screamed out Mrs. Magnal; "Lady Helena Fortescue, indeed, to be invited

merely as a nurse; really your ladyship's presumption, I had almost said, astonishes me."

"You did not so misconceive and misunderstand me, I trust," said Lady Restormel to Lady Helena, after darting a disdainful glance at Mrs. Magnal.

"No, certainly not; but I consider you as at this moment in a state of intoxication, that of strong emotion, and I am very sure that the proposal which your excited feelings urged you to make to-day, your cooler judgment would disapprove to-morrow, and not only so, that judgment would censure me for accepting it."

"You are right, quite right; surely, surely, dear girl, I have hitherto strangely misjudged you."

"Perhaps not; but the line of my duty is here so clearly marked out I could not mistake it."

"Why, really," said Mrs. Magnal, "it was very clear that Lady Helena Fortescue

was not to go with any one as a nurse; that line of duty was marked out plainly enough, and I can only wonder such a thing was ever thought of, much less proposed."

"On that subject, madam, I shall allow you to wonder still," said Lady Restormel, haughtily; "and now, Lady Helena, God bless you, and I hope I may tell Restormel that you will allow him to endeavour to express to you, for an endeavour it can only be, his sense of the obligations you have conferred both on the mother and the son—obligations, too, which, but for circumstances, we should never have discovered."

"Certainly, certainly we shall be happy to see Lord Restormel, whenever he chooses to come to Laurel Grove," replied Lady Helena, with as much indifference as she could assume; and after having received and returned Lady Restormel's parting embrace, she assisted her to the door of the hall, and when the carriage

drove off, instead of going out to pay her intended visit, Lady Helena returned to her own apartment, full of thankfulness, of gladness, and of reverie.

CHAP. XIV.

In the meanwhile Lord Restormel was passing anxious and restless hours, for he feared that some accident had retarded his mother on her journey, or that she had had a relapse, and he had resolved to return full speed to Laurel Grove, when just as he had ridden up a hill, which commanded two roads, and a considerable tract of country, he saw the carriage at a distance, and hastened to meet it, full of anxiety and alarm. But his first glance at the countenance of Lady Restormel reassured him, and surprised him at the same time; for it was a look of such quiet, benevolent cheerfulness as he had not seen on it for some time; it seemed indicative of a heart at peace with itself, and with all the world, even though she must have been conscious that her delay had made him uneasy. This was so singular a disregard to his

feelings in so fond and attentive a mother, that, in a feeling of pique and momentary resentment, he stopt the carriage, and asked what had so long delayed her?

"Oh!" she replied, with a smile of great meaning, "I made a visit on my way."

"A visit! then why not tell me such was your intention; I have been so anxious. And were you in a fit condition to pay visits?"

"No; especially one that lay ten miles out of my way."

"Ten miles!—amazing!—how could you think of going?"

"I would have gone if it had been ten times as far; but let me drive on, I am now nearly exhausted."

Lord Restormel, distressed at his mother's rashness, and wondering what its cause could be, was very impatient till she arrived at the inn, and was able to satisfy the curiosity she had excited. "Now, then, dearest mother, explain, for

I am on the rack of curiosity; where can you have been?"

"To Mrs. Magnal's," she replied; and Lord Restormel started with joyful surprise and emotion, but by his looks only interrogated her further; "yes," continued she, but retaining her calmness no longer, for her voice became nearly inarticulate, from tears; "yes, Restormel, I could not have slept to night, if I had not gone in person, at whatever risk to myself, to thank and bless that noble and admirable girl; and even to humble myself before her. What will you say and feel, Restormel, when you hear that the being who watched over my delirious nights, and preserved the life of your mother, and whom I fancied my guardian angel, was no other than Lady Helena Fortescue!"

A feeling too mighty for expression now throbbed in the heart of Lord Restormel, while sinking back in his chair he murmured out a blessing on her and burst into tears; but the next moment he started

forward, and clasping his mother in his arms, laid her head on his bosom, and held her there for some moments in silence. Happy Lord Restormel! the wound that had so long rankled in his heart was healed. The mother whom he adored, and for whose sake he had been willing to sacrifice his consciously encreasing attachment to the being whom she had proscribed, had avowedly relinquished her prejudice against that beloved being, and had even taught him new motives for love and admiration for her;—the woman whose influence he had vainly endeavoured to escape, had conferred on his mother and himself everlasting obligations, and the duties dearest to his heart now sanctioned the indulgence of its tenderest inclinations. There are moments in life which are worth years of suffering, and Lord Restormel felt that these were some of them. But such are often transient as they are sweet, and so were these.

Lady Restormel, now the violence of

the excitement was past, felt how much she had dared, and how much she was exhausted, and she fell into a deep, long, swoon, which banished from her son's mind all the delightful consciousnesses and pleasant visions which had floated there, and substituted affectionate terror and alarm in their stead. But during the night of watchfulness on his part, which succeeded, Lord Restormel found that his mother's slumbers, though short, were tranquil and refreshing, and the next day he had the happiness of conducting her, though by slow stages, to that house which she had once expected never to behold again! still, however, she had made exertions, and undergone emotions too great for her strength; and when Lord Restormel hoped he should have been able to return to Laurel Grove to express the grateful feelings of his heart to Lady Helena Fortescue, duty, he found, would still confine him to the sick couch of his mother!

"But, dear Charles, if you will not

leave me to go to Laurel Grove," said Lady Restormel, "you must write to Lady Helena."

"To be sure I must," he replied; and a letter was written, but soon destroyed again; another, and another shared the same fate, some were too cold, some too warm; and not one even of those which he most disapproved, could he bear to shew to Lady Restormel. At length he forced himself to be contented, and a letter was sent express to Laurel Grove! Lady Helena, when she left home, had intended to return thither if possible, as soon as she was certain that her guests were gone; but Mr. and Mrs. Magnal were so desirous of her staying till the next day, and she was so averse to treat them as if she made a mere convenience of their house, that she deferred her departure. Nor did she feel this to be the sacrifice which she would certainly have considered it, had not the interview with Lady Restormel taken place—for the evening did not appear long and tedious to her! the recovered sunshine

of her soul shed a radiance over every thing! not only had Lady Restormel's dislike of her faded away, before the consciousness of her kind and endearing services, but she felt that she was become the object of that lady's grateful affection, that the son would be called upon to share in the warm and thankful feelings of his mother! Lady Helena allowed herself full time to indulge in the reveries incidental to such feelings before she joined her host and hostess at their tea-table; she was therefore able and willing, when she did so, to endeavour to make them as cheerful as herself; and she, whom they had seen all the morning pale, absent, languid, low, and silent, now appeared to them with a flushed cheek, a sparkling eye, that eye "begetting" occasions for her wit—

"Which her fair tongue, conceits expositor
Did turn into a laughter-moving jest."

Mr. Magnal was delighted, so was his wife; but she was also surprized, till unable any longer to restrain her astonish-

ment she threw her spoon down, as if in angry defiance, on the board, and exclaimed—"Well, I protest Lady Helena you are inexplicable to me! what is become of all your sighing and moping, and where is that eternal head-ache which you said would last your life? Why, child! you are not the same person you were in the morning! pray tell me what has wrought this change; but do not tell me it is all because that proud, disagreeable woman has been here and kissed you, and cried over, and said fine things to you, which was the least she could do for you after all you did for her!" Lady Helena scarcely knew how to reply to this interrogatory, as she was conscious that to Lady Restormel's visit the change was solely to be attributed, for she felt that it had drawn aside the veil that had lately hid every thing, which was fair in the prospect of creation, from her view, and had removed the weight that sat like the night-mare on her breast; yet answer it she must, and she could only reply with sincerity—"I must own that

Lady Restormel's visit has wrought this change, as her unfounded dislike of me weighed heavily on my spirits." Mrs. Magnal was silent from angry surprise—but her husband said—"No doubt it must have been very trying to you to be disliked and slighted by her, for she is Lord Restormel's mother!" Lady Helena started, and blushed deeply at this assertion coming from a man so wholly devoid of penetration, and feared that the secrets of her heart were not so well concealed as she had believed them to be; but before she could reply, her mind was set at ease on this subject, as Mr. Magnal went on to say, that if Lady Restormel derived no distinction and consequence from her own qualities, she did from being the mother of Charles de Mowbray, Baron Restormel, whose family was most ancient and respectable, and who was almost lineally descended from Thomas de Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, who, when banished from England by Richard the Second, went to the Holy Wars and did great deeds

there. "Grant me patience," cried Mrs. Magnal, who had none of her husband's reverence for pedigree, "what does Lady Helena care for the dead Thomas de Mowbray, she is more likely, I think, to admire the living Charles de Mowbray himself, though he is, I fear, as proud and as positive as his mother, and quite as wrong headed, for I am told all the poor in his neighbourhood can read, owing to him and his mother, and that they are reading their Bibles when they ought to be in bed and asleep."

"Shocking!" said Lady Helena, laughing, "and I wonder Lord and Lady Restormel are not ashamed of themselves to teach their poor to prefer reading their Bible to lying in bed, and if Lady Restormel were not the mother of the man who descends from Thomas de Mowbray, and if he himself did not descend from the same stock, I should certainly not be pleased at being reconciled to the mother, nor glad at never having quarrelled with the son."

The next evening Lady Helena returned home, and her return, with a face dressed in smiles, and with no traces of languor in her appearance, was a joyful surprise to her anxious mother and brother, and to Miss Brightwen, whom her ill looks and depressed spirits had alarmed; nor were they sparing in questions concerning the cause of a change so sudden and unexpected. But it was easier for them to ask than for Lady Helena to reply, and it was with considerable difficulty and evident embarrassment that she informed them of Lady Restormel's visit to her, and of the interesting conversation which passed between them.

"Then I suppose, Helena, you will have a visit from Lord Restormel soon?" said Lord Aston.

"Very likely," replied Lady Helena, unguardedly.

"Oh, you expect one, do you?"

"For shame, Aston! you make your sister blush!" said his mother, "and I am

sure she has no occasion—for she ought to be very proud of the cause of both visits, as they are tributes to her worth."

"No, dear mother, not exactly so. Helena may be proud of the one, but she must be pleased with the other—the one gratified her pride, the other will gratify her——"

Lady Helena left the room before he had concluded his speech.

"So, so," continued he to Sophia, "I see how it is—and I now hope that the first wish of my brother's heart will be gratified; but whither are you going my dear mother?"

"In search of Helena; I have not yet told her all that is on my heart concerning her rash exposure of her own precious life in nursing Lady Restormel; but I could not bear to name the subject to her except in private. It is too painful!"

"It was rash certainly," said Lord Aston, after a short silence, the result of his finding himself alone with Sophia, "it was rash, but who can wonder at and

blame her. Helena would probably have done the same for any one so endangered and afflicted, but so to dare for the mother of a man whom I now suspect was by no means indifferent to her, and to serve her so effectually too, must have been a gratification of the highest order! I declare I should like to see the meeting between her and Restormel! Happy Helena! happy Restormel! now there can be no obstacle to the indulgence of their wishes! and happy indeed are those who can give way unopposed by any external or internal barrier to a virtuous attachment. Oh! how I envy their fate and pity my own!" he added in a low voice, then suddenly quitted the room.

"That dear, amiable being is not happy," said the unconscious Sophia to herself; "I am afraid his wife is not all that she should be!" The next morning Lady Helena rose very early, and sat reading at a window that commanded the road along which Lord Restormel must come; not that it was probable he would come

early, still it was pleasant to look out of the window, and fancy some distant object was the one she expected; but hour succeeded to hour, and yet she saw neither horseman nor carriage in the distance. At length, and as early as he or any messenger from his village could arrive, she descried a man on horseback coming full speed. He brought a letter from Lord Restormel: Lady Helena was disappointed—still, to receive a letter was something, and while with a trembling hand she broke the seal, she was very glad that she was alone. Whatever were its contents, and however little they had satisfied the writer, they were certainly gratifying to Lady Helena—for she read them over and over again, with blushes and trepidation; and with an absent look, an embarrassed manner, and with a voice whose tones betrayed considerable emotion, while answering the morning enquiries after her health, she took her seat at the breakfast table; but in vain did she try to inform her mother that she had had a letter from

Lord Restormel; she had not said so when she entered the room, and while Lord Aston was absent; therefore, now that Lord Aston had joined them, her difficulty was increased, though if Lady Helena had not been too much absorbed in herself to possess her usual penetration, she would have seen that her brother was not in a humour for pleasantry—she would have observed as great a change in him, as had been noticed in herself, but of an opposite nature—she would have heard her mother say—"Aston! there is your usual seat by Miss Brightwen left for you!" and would have wondered that he did not take it, but seated himself at the bottom of the table. She would also have been surprised to hear her mother say—"Aston, I thought you would have resumed your morning walks with Miss Brightwen, but I find she looked for you in vain to-day at the accustomed spot;" while, in reply to Sophia's observation of "indeed I was quite disappointed at not seeing you there," he simply and rather coldly said that he

was busy in his own room; but Lady Helena was wholly engrossed with her own feelings and perplexities, and was wondering how to introduce the subject of the letter, when the butler came in and said, "The messenger from Lord Restormel's begs to know, my lady, whether there is any answer?"

"Oh, no; he need not wait," replied Lady Helena, blushing, and expecting, but in vain, to be the object of some good-natured raillery from her brother.

Her mother, as was to be supposed, only asked, with unaffected surprise, why she had not told her she had a letter from Green Hills; and begged to know what Lady Restormel said of her own health?

"The letter is from Lord Restormel," replied Lady Helena.

"Indeed!—and what does he say?"

"Nothing particular of his mother's health, except that she is too unwell still for him to be easy to leave her."

"But did he write only to say that?"

"No; to thank me—that is all."

"May I not see the letter?"

"No; it would not interest you, mamma."

"Then it does not contain an offer, I conclude?" said Lord Aston, trying to be cheerful.

"Certainly not; if it did, I should have carried it to mamma."

"What, for her to answer it as she chose—obedient excellence!—but perhaps it contains a preparation for an offer; do let me see it?"

"Not for the world, after what you have said, Aston."

"Not for the world!—a strong expression!" But it was scarcely too strong for Lady Helena's feelings at the moment, as she not only considered Lord Restormel's letter as too sacred to be shown to any one, but she feared that another should not discover in it the meaning which she delighted to fancy and to brood over, and should, therefore, destroy the delusion which she had a pleasure in encouraging: she therefore made no reply to her bro-

ther's remark on the force of her words, but observed that she did not choose to expose the letter to his comments, or those of any one, as commentators were apt to obscure the meaning which they pretended to illustrate, and which but for their comments would have remained perfectly clear.

"So, then, there is a meaning in Restormel's letter, is there, which is now clear to you, and which you are afraid should not appear so to other people; is that the case, Helena?"

It was the case; and she knew not how to reply, but, in great confusion, she reproached Lord Aston for his saucy remarks, adding, "Do, pray Miss Brightwen, keep Aston in order, for if you do not, I am sure no one else can."

"Indeed, you overrate my power," said Sophia, "I find I have no influence over Lord Aston."

Scarcely had she uttered these words, when, having now recovered her powers of observation, Lady Helena almost started to see the effect they produced on her

brother. That before laughing eye became downcast, and the arch smile was succeeded by a compression of his lips, as if in suppressed agony; then darting a mournful glance at Sophia, whose head was turned towards Lady Helena, he rose, and hastily quitted the room.

"Aston is certainly ill to-day, or his letters from abroad have distressed him," said Lady Erpingham; "I must go after him."

"Poor man!" cried Sophia, "I began to fear I had unconsciously offended him, there is such a marked change in his manner to me to-day; but I now see that he is only unhappy; I fear his wife is not all he could wish."

"You are right there, Miss Brightwen; but really could you, did you attribute the coldness which you say you observe in Aston's manner to-day to your having unconsciously offended him?"

"Yes, I did," replied Sophia, with great simplicity, and with every appearance of sincerity.

Lady Helena sighed, but said nothing; she was too wise, and too delicate towards her brother; too considerate towards Miss Brightwen to draw aside the veil which hid the truth from her eyes, and she only observed, that Lady Aston not only did not make her husband happy, but was not happy herself, as she knew very well that he married her from gratitude, not love.

"But how is it possible that any woman can live with Lord Aston, and not try to make him happy?—Oh, since I have known him," cried Sophia, in a faltering voice, "I have not wondered that my poor brother was so ready to die for him; and I have felt more reconciled to that terrible event."

Lady Helena surprised at words like these, from a woman of such exemplary self-command, looked at her with a piercing eye, and arch expression of countenance, exclaiming—"This from you! if Aston were not a married man I should think that you were in love with him."

"But he is a married man," replied

Sophia, coldly and proudly, "and I neither forget that, nor myself. Had Lord Aston not been married, I should not have allowed myself to feel for him what I do, much less should I have thought of expressing my feelings. The strength of what I said is a sufficient proof of its innocence."

"Quite sufficient," said Lady Helena; "but, my dear friend, why wonder that Lady Aston torments her husband; you know little of the human heart if you do not know that we always torment those most whom we love best."

"I never did—I never do."

"But you are a nonsuch, and the silly man who called Julia Una, would with greater propriety call you *Unique;* by-the-by I wish he would fall in love with you, as I once said before."

"Do not fib, Lady Helena."

"No; you are right, it is a bad custom; well, but to resume what I said concerning poor human nature, Lady Aston is and must be jealous."

"I dare say she has no cause to be so."

"Humph!—*ne gagez pas.*"

"Lady Helena, how can you thus calumniate your noble brother," said Sophia eagerly, and with a blushing cheek.

"Bravo!—friendship!"—replied Lady Helena, laughing; "however, I have no real indisputable grounds for the calumny, as you call it, and I will say no more; but this I know, Miss Brightwen, that the woman is rash and foolish, indeed, who accepts any thing in lieu of love for love from the man she marries. It were as wise to accept, in return for possessions in the genial climate of Italy, an estate in Nova Zembla. Such a marriage would to me be like the grasp of the statue's hand to Don Giovanni; I should die of it, and so perhaps will my sister-in-law, if she does not wear out her husband first."

"Poor woman! I pity her any way, but most, if having helped to kill, she should survive her husband."

"Then the kindest wish would be, my dear friend, to wish her to die first."

"I do not think it right to have a wish on the subject."

"Nor I; yet I own that it is one on which I have many wishes, but I shall keep them all to myself, and now to my studies."

Lady Helena then retired to her own room, after she had heard from her mother that Lord Aston was only rather depressed, and her chief study was the letter of Lord Restormel. The next day, and the day after, Lady Helena would sit to work no where but in the room, which commanded the road to Green Hills, and never before had she been tempted to draw the prospect from that window, but now she declared it was irresistible, and there she sat at her pencil. It is true that she frequently looked off to see if she could discover a horseman or a carriage in the distance; still she was so interested in her drawing, that it was with great reluctance she left it to dress for dinner. On the third morn-

ing of her industry, she saw an open carriage, and with two out-riders in crimson and silver liveries. Then his mother is better, she mentally exclaimed, and here he is at last! Lady Helena having ascertained this fact, tried to resume her drawing, but her touch was ill-assured, and all was mist before her eyes. Pshaw! cried she, throwing down her pencil, in a pleasing pet,—then going to the glass, she adjusted her hair, was vexed to see her lip nearly as pale as her cheek; peeped out to see how near the phaeton was, and trembled, with emotion, when she saw it approaching fast. Oh! thought she, clasping her hands in thankfulness, with what different eyes and feelings do I gaze on that carriage now to what I did when I saw it last; then the sight of it overwhelmed me with shame and regret, and now it gives me a sensation of triumph and joy.

While these thoughts were passing in her mind, Lady Helena looked out of the window, and met the eyes of Lord Restormel! instead of stopping to receive

and return his salutation, the conscious girl started back, full of blushing confusion, and had not recovered herself when the servant announced him. He was more agitated though not so confused as herself; he had meant to say a great deal when he first saw her, but he was unable to utter a word; he only pressed her hand repeatedly to his lips, then turned to the window in silence and evident emotion.

Again Lady Helena felt thankful, for what different feelings did his kissing her hand occasion in her now, to those she experienced when he had so presumed before; and scarcely could she forbear to press to her own lips the hand which his had touched. But when Lord Restormel had recovered his first emotion, he also recovered his power of speech, and he became so eloquent, that Lady Helena was very sorry when the entrance of Lady Erpingham and Lord Aston interrupted his conversation. Lord Restormel was the bearer of a letter from

his mother, in which she entreated the whole family at Laurel Grove to become her guests, as soon as she was well enough to receive them, and that Lord Erpingham should be returned from his tour, which had unexpectedly been of a longer duration than he had originally intended. A ready consent was granted, and a day of enjoyment succeeded, unclouded over, except by Lord Aston's refusal to be of the party to Green Hills; he had made preparations for leaving England directly, and had written to tell Lady Aston she might expect him every day. He made this unexpected disclosure in the presence of his whole family and Lord Restormel, as if he wished to avoid individual interrogations, as to the cause of his sudden departure; and he made it in a hurried, uncomfortable manner, which did not escape the observant Lady Helena, but she said nothing; and she was still silent though tears were in her eyes, when her mother and Sophia expressed their surprise and disappointment

on hearing of his determination; and Lord Restormel earnestly requested him to postpone his journey; but she was not able to remain so, for Lord Restormel conjured her to use her eloquence to prevail on her brother to delay his departure, that he might come to Green Hills.

"Aston," she replied, in a voice which deep feeling made rather tremulous, "is the best judge of the necessity there is for his departure; if he were to stay here for months longer, I should equally think his stay was too short; but now his health is re-established, I feel that Lady Aston and his children have their claims, and I do not wonder that he is resolved to hasten to them, nor can I urge him to give up his intentions." It seemed as if Lord Aston understood what was passing in the heart of his sister, as she said this, for he did not look at her, as if surprised at her refusal to importune him to stay; but he said in a hurried manner, while the others exclaimed against

Lady Helena for sanctioning his immediate departure— "Helena has only spoken like a sensible woman, I must go, I ought to go," and then left them. Lady Helena now turned her penetrating eyes on Sophia, to see whether she seemed to feel any emotion or consciousness which she wished and endeavoured to hide; but on the contrary, she told her regret for Lord Aston's resolution, warmly and openly, and her unembarrassed expression of countenance while she spoke, showed that all was at peace within. "I am glad of it," thought Lady Helena, "glad to see that well-regulated mind remains consistent with itself. It would be unworthy of her even to suspect that a married man loved her."

Lord Restormel was easily persuaded to pass the whole day at Laurel Grove, though, as his mother would expect to see him the next day at breakfast in her dressing room, he must travel all night to enable him to be home in time.

"Had we known that you would not

sleep here, and sleep no where to night, my Lord I should not have pressed you to stay the day with us, for the nights are very cold."

"I now regret the pleasure we have enjoyed in your company," said Lady Erpingham; "do not you Helena?"—She wished she could have said yes, but could not; and while Lord Restormel's eyes were fixed on her countenance as if he were curious to hear what her answer would be, she said, "But if he wraps himself up, very, very warmly, Lord Restormel will not catch cold I dare say."

"At least, I can assert that I shall not regard the inconvenience if I do; for so many happy hours would still have been cheaply purchased, and for the suffering from the sensation of— cold itself— that I shall be too much absorbed in thinking over the joys that are past, to be at all conscious of— especially as I may, I hope, expect a renewal of them soon."

How strange, yet how common is that tendency which men and women

have, at all periods of a conscious attachment, to torment themselves! When Lady Helena retired for the night and recalled all that had passed, she thought Lord Restormel's words, which I have recorded above, were too studied, too courteous for a man who felt any deep feeling at the moment; and she worked herself up into a fixed resolution to forget him, or at least, to behave distantly to him at their next meeting; when the sound of violent rain alarmed her fears for his health, and the excessive darkness of the night made her apprehensive for his safety, she could not help exclaiming, as she tried to compose herself to sleep towards morning—"Poor, dear Restormel! how could I ever think of behaving coldly towards him!" The next day Lady Helena rose as much inclined as she had been the preceding one, to indulge in musings, recollections, and anticipations; and all the day, dreams which float round the fancy of those who are conscious of an ever-growing attachment in their own hearts, and have reason to

believe that the attachment is mutual! But she ceased to think of herself and her own prospects when Lord Aston informed her that he should leave Laurel Grove the next day; and when she saw his manly brow was clouded over by a gloom which he evidently tried to conceal.

"This is a very sudden resolution, Aston, I was not prepared to lose you so soon!" she cried, "and this is indeed an affliction to me!"

"How kind in you, Helena, to regret parting with me when the prospects of happy love are evidently opening upon you! I fear if mine were such, that my heart would not be capacious enough for any regrets."

"Do not so judge a passion, you have never experienced, Aston! love perhaps is not so selfish and exclusive a feeling as you imagine." While she said this, the agitated silence of her brother seemed to contradict her assertion, that the passion of love was unknown to him; but he was silent, and Lady Helena continued—"I am not

speaking now from my own experience, for I fear my prospects are by no means so bright and certain as you imagine them, but from the experience of others; and I believe that your happy lover's heart is made so universally benevolent by his agreeable sensations, that he is disposed to love every one and care for every one—and every object that he looks at is charming; just as when one looks into a piece of cut glass, one sees beautiful prisms before us, and on every side, and all are the creations of the medii, through which one is looking, while the more broken the glass, the more bright and numerous are the beautiful rays."

"Yes, Helena; but on the contrary, the more broken the heart, the more dark all surrounding objects appear."

"I was not thinking or talking of a broken heart, dear brother!"

"But I was," he replied, deeply sighing, "let us change the conversation, I want to talk of things, not feelings—of persons, not personations." Here he turned

away to conceal the evident agitation which now shook his frame. Had the cause of Lord Aston's emotion, and that broken-heartedness to which he alluded, been caused by any other circumstance than a sudden, but deep-founded attachment, and one which his being married rendered a criminal one also, Lady Helena would eagerly and tenderly have interrogated the interesting speaker, and by prevailing on him to disclose his cause of suffering, would have tried to soothe it. But principle forbade her to encourage such a passion, and it would have been doing so, had she tempted Lord Aston to dwell on it, by talking of it. The love which it was criminal in the brother to feel, however deserving the object of it, it would be, she felt, improper for the sister to seem conscious of—she therefore awaited in silence Aston's further communications. At length he took a letter from his pocket, which he begged Lady Helena to give his father when he returned, after having first read it herself. It contained, he told

her, his wishes, that Lord Erpingham should settle whatever sum of money he thought fit on Miss Brightwen, for which sum he himself would be answerable—but that the father, not the son, must be the ostensible giver. "My object," he said, "is to make her independent." No money can repay what Edward Everard did for me, even though the life he saved is one of misery and suffering; but I cannot bear that she should, for want of money, be dependent in any way on the kindness of others; and could her brother know her present situation, he would, I am sure, be pleased at seeing her removed from the necessity of it by my hand."

"I agree with you, but I fear Miss Brightwen will not condescend to accept pecuniary obligation!"

"How! not when I must still remain the obliged person!"

"Yes, as you are not paying her in kind. If Lady Aston had been poor, would you have thought of giving her money in return for her tender care of you?"

" No, certainly not."

" Well, then, how can you even offer to repay the service prompted by the heart which the brother rendered you, by a pecuniary service to the sister ?"

" Helena, Helena, have mercy on me ! I cannot endure that Miss Brightwen should remain dependent even on my own family, and if she has any generosity in her nature, she will not render an unhappy man still more unhappy, by refusing what can alone alleviate his sense of suffering : will you be my advocate ?"

" I will."

" Now then, to give you another commission." He then took a sealed parcel from his pocket; it was Sophia's picture. " Take this picture," said he, with as much firmness as he could assume, " and when Miss Villeroy marries Marcus, let it be my wedding gift to her, for I know she will value it, and of all my presents she will value that the most."

" Yes, if it be Miss Brightwen's ; but I thought you would never—"

"Helena!" he replied, seizing her hand, "I have been rash and presumptuous, but I cannot be deliberately unprincipled. Take away that picture! I have looked at it too long!"

He then left the room, but soon returned, calm and with a look of mournful resignation, which Lady Helena saw with more sympathizing emotion than she thought it right to express; but she could not help seizing Lord Aston's hand, and affectionately pressing it; his returned the pressure, and both felt that the heart of each was understood by the other. But Lord Aston was not to go till the next day, and Lady Helena had a strong curiosity to know before he went what Sophia's determination would be with regard to the offered donation. Accordingly she sounded her on the subject as delicately as she could, and at length informed her of her father and brother's wishes on the subject. To Lady Helena's great surprise and satisfaction Sophia betrayed no signs of impatience while she spoke,

and no blushes, as if of wounded pride, mantled on her pure pale cheek; her eager questioner therefore thought the point was gained, and that she should make her brother easy before he went. But the opposition and resistance of principle are always calm and dignified. It is only that of the temper or feelings which is angry and impatient, and Sophia's was the former. When Lady Helena had ended, Miss Brightwen calmly replied, that she was deeply sensible of the intended kindness, and begged Lady Helena would repeat her words, but declared her fixed resolution not to profit by it; and this kindness is the result, in my opinion, of erroneous views of my past and present situation; your brother cannot bear that I should be dependent on any one, and exposed to the caprices and temper of any one. Now I shall begin my reply by asking you what is being dependent? you do not I suppose call the tradesman dependent on you of whom you purchase goods? You give him money, for which he gives you money's

worth; that is he barters his possession for yours, and you never look on him as your dependent.—I do the same for a certain salary, I give my time, and the use of my poor abilities to a young lady, in order to benefit her in the way required; that is, I give what I have and she wants for her parent's money, that money I fairly earn therefore, and this is no dependence. Indeed Lord Aston is frightened at a word. But then you tell me he connot bear that I should work for my living—I, born to higher prospects. That is kind, but if there be any state of mind more desirable than another, it is that of complete resignation to the will of Providence, and to whatever trials it has been pleased to ordain. Such, after some human struggles, I obtained—such I feel still, and believe me that, while I have been earning my pittance, cheered by the consciousness which I have mentioned, I lay my head on my pillow at night with feelings I would not exchange for any the world could give me. No, no, I cannot

sacrifice my independence, and why should I do it?—the service of love that my poor brother rendered Lord Aston, no pecuniary service to me or mine can repay."

"So I said!" eagerly exclaimed Lady Helena; "and I should incur odious pecuniary obligation, and yet Lord Aston be in debt still to one whom he can never remunerate,—I should lose all I value, and he would not be benefitted by it."

"Yes, he would be benefitted in his feelings, but I should be injured in mine; and much as I esteem Lord Aston, I feel that I am not called upon to make this sacrifice of my own feelings to his?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, as to the misery of being exposed to the caprices and tempers of other persons; this again is starting at a name. Those only are great sufferers from the temper of others, who cannot command their own; and this cannot be my case, for, remember, I have lived with Lady Villeroy."

"Yes, and you are going to live with

that capricious young person, Lady Helena Fortescue; and depend on it you will not earn your living too easily with her. I profess myself convinced by your reasoning, and seeing clearly that you, on principle, court trials, I shall, on principle, give them to you, that you may depend on."

"Do not calumniate yourself, dear Lady Helena; I doubt not but I shall be quite happy with you, though I assure you that I do not mean to accept money, even here, without earning it by the performance of some duties. I know I feel that I can be of service to you, and if I can but break you of one bad habit, I shall have deserved my reward."

"Certainly; but suppose I marry, as papa and mamma are too old to improve, what will you do then?"

"I dare say I shall easily find a situation, as I flatter myself I can have a good character from my last place."

"Oh, yes, I shall be exhibited as a proof of your *sçavoir faire*—and only see

and hear Lady Helena Fortescue!—what a pattern of propriety she is become! and all since her eccentricities were cut off and pared away by the Brightwen's scissars. Oh, dear, what a happy man her husband will now be;—but how can I laugh thus, when our poor, dear Aston is going away to-morrow."

"To-morrow!"

"Yes."

"But not early?"

"We shall see him again after to-night."

"He says so."

"And he did say so!"

But Lord Aston finding that he could not take leave of his family, and Sophia, without betraying emotions, which he wished to conceal, resolved to depart early the next day, without taking leave. Lady Helena's quick eye, however, discovered the secret; and when they parted, at night, she threw herself into his arms, and while she received his affectionate embrace, she was convinced that it was a final one.

The next morning, when Lady Erpingham asked where Lord Aston was, as they assembled at breakfast, she heard that he had departed at day-break, and her grief was excessive; nor was Sophia less loud in her expressions of regret, so loud that Lady Helena was still more convinced her brother suffered alone, and that no shade of forbidden tenderness darkened the spotless purity of Sophia Brightwen's character.

CHAP. XV.

A MATERNAL change now took place in Sophia's prospects. Her father wrote to inform her that her mother-in-law was dead; she, therefore, expected that he would soon summon her to superintend his family.

Lady Erpingham regretted her son's departure, the more because he would now sail without seeing his father again, for if he had waited only two days longer Lord Erpingham would have been home.

The earl's tour had been extended far beyond his expectations; and circumstances had delayed his return, but they were of so pleasant a nature to his benevolent heart, that he did not regret the delay, and he now came home with tidings to impart, which would, he knew, be received with joy by every member of his family.

When Lord Erpingham sought and

found Mr. Brightwen, to whose abode he directed his steps as soon as he set out on his journey; he felt great anxiety at the idea of seeing him, from expectation of the emotion he should excite in him. But the Mr. Brightwen whom he now saw was quite a different person from the man he had once beheld; he was then an opulent country gentleman, with feelings unchilled, and prospects unblighted; since then he had been a ruined man, had been forced to sell his estates; had married merely to procure the means of living; had been obliged to let one child leave his home to earn her own livelihood, and another contract a bad marriage to procure a maintenance; and, lastly, he had become a speculator. Alas! the heart that has once been put in the exhausted receiver of that air-pump—commercial speculation, has its affections in a measure dried up, and withered for ever. A series of selfish anxieties make a speculator wholly engrossed in himself and his own concerns, while tenderness and consideration for others fade away before the

constant gnawings of alarmed and craving self-love. Hence the name and recollection of Edward Everard, once so sacred, so fresh in his mind, and so overwhelming to his feelings, were become matters of indifference to him. Hence Sophia, that child whose virtues were once his pride, was now rarely remembered by him with pride or pleasure, and he had almost ceased for some time to write to her; therefore it was only in consistency with this state of mind that Mr. Brightwen should receive the disclosure of Lord Erpingham's being the father of Lord Aston, the man who had been the means of depriving him of Edward Everard, with the most perfect *sang froid,* and hear with no uncommon pleasure his eulogy on his daughter.

Interests of a nearer and dearer kind evidently engrossed him; and as Lord Erpingham had heard on enquiry concerning him that he and his partner were great speculators in trade, he suspected that Mr. Brightwen was then undergoing the consequent anxiety of such ventures,

but he was mistaken. Mr. Brightwen was indeed every day expecting to hear the result of one of these risks, but he was also on the eve of learning whether his claims to the very large fortune a relation of his mother's, who was recently dead in Russia, would be acknowledged without a law-suit or not, and he and his daughter be not only restored to the situation in life from which his imprudence had driven them, but be possessed of much greater opulence than they had ever known before. When he communicated these expectations to the earl, and showed him the clear and convincing documents on which they were founded, he exclaimed—"Is it possible, sir, that you never communicated this welcome intelligence to your daughter?"

"My lord, I am not much in the habit of writing to her now."

"But it must have given her such pleasure to hear of it on your account, if not on her own!"

"But why excite in her hopes which might end in disappointment?"

" True, and your forbearance, when I consider its motive, is exemplary. Still, it is so natural for a parent to confide his hopes to a beloved child ! I could not myself have had such self-denial."

Nor would Mr. Brightwen in earlier days; his heart was narrowed in its interests, and its affectious and aversion to write letters was become stronger in him than his wish to make his child the sharer of his hopes. Thus sluggishness of feeling, not consideration for her, was the true cause of his silence.

" And when, sir, do you expect a final answer from the gentleman to whom you have applied ?"

" In a month possibly."

" But you will, I conclude, go to London to receive it."

" Yes."

" Then, as I shall return home by London I will see you there, if you name your hotel, as I should like to be myself the bearer of the welcome news to your admirable daughter; in the meanwhile I will keep the secret." It was so settled, and the

earl having had the benevolent pleasure of finding when he reached London, that Mr. Brightwen's claims were acknowledged without litigation, was now returned to enjoy the delight of imparting it to Sophia herself. But when, after receiving the welcome of his wife and daughter, he turned to speak to Miss Brightwen, his power of utterance wholly failed him, his under lip quivered with emotion, and seizing her hand, he imprinted a kiss in silence on her cheek.

"Dear me! papa!" cried Lady Helena, "if mamma is not jealous, I am!"

"Why, I declare the sight of Miss Brightwen has brought tears into your eyes."

"What is the matter! what has happened dear Augustus!" cried the countess, "anything unpleasant concerning Miss Brightwen?"

"What of my father, sir?" said Sophia, turning very pale.

"My dear, young friend, forgive me," replied the earl; "I have nothing but

good news to impart;—your father will be here in a few days, and would take you away with him, but I will not allow it, and so I have told him."

"But he wishes to do so."

"That is not all, nor the best of my news. You are become a great heiress!"

"What!" screamed out Lady Helena, seizing his arm, while Sophia replied, shaking her head mournfully,—

"Aye, some fortune speculation I suppose has elevated us to-day, for us to be thrown down by another to-morrow."

"No, not so, nor will I part with your father till I have prevailed on him to put your fortune out of the reach of contingencies."

"What can you mean, my Lord?"

He then told her the circumstances, and while Lady Helena pirouetted round the room, with as much sylph-like agility as she did before she was in love, Sophia, in tearful silence, glided out of it, and did not return again for some time; when she did, her countenance was serene and

her manner as composed as usual—not so Lady Helena; she enjoyed Sophia's restoration to her rank in society, with even agitated delight, and not on her own account only, but because she knew the pleasure which it would give Lord Aston and Julia; nor can I help owning, that when Lady Helena's benevolent and affectionate feelings had exacted their dues, her less amiable ones exulted in the mortification which Miss Brightwen's great opulence would occasion Lady Villeroy.

The next day, for the first time, Lady Helena called her Sophia—a liberty which she had never hazarded in her adversity. Miss Brightwen had always felt the delicacy which had caused her to address her with such formal respect; and now equally felt the affectionate kindness which dictated this unusual familiarity; for it proved at once how eager she was to consider her as an equal in worldly point of view, having always been fond of acknowledging her in higher points as her superior.

"You are a noble creature, Lady

Helena," said Miss Brightwen, smiling to see by her countenance, that, after she had hazarded the appellation of Sophia, she was afraid she might have given offence, " and I conjure you never to call me Miss Brightwen again."

" Thank you! dear Sophia; but when will you call me Helena?"

" Never, except when we are quite alone; I am too proud to seem to value myself so much on my intimacy with persons of rank, as to take liberties with them in order to prove that intimacy. In private you shall be and always have been in my heart, my dear Helena; but before the world, self-respect will always make me call you Lady Helena.

" No, no, not always, should you come to call on me at Lady Villeroy's in Gloucester Place, and drive up to the door in your own barouche and four, and two out riders, I hope you will enter the room looking at me, if Lady Villeroy be present, with *unpetit air de protection,* and holding out your forefinger to my eager grasp, say

in a drawling voice, like Mansfeldt—Helena, dear, how are you?"

"Well," replied Sophia, "when you imagine an improbable situation for me, it is only right to imagine an impossible conduct for me in that situation. You staying in Gloucester Place at Lady Villeroy's! what should carry you thither?"

"Not a stage coach again, believe me."

"But a carriage with a viscount's coronet on it will perhaps."

"Hush! hush! what an image! Visions of glory spare my aching sight! But here comes papa with two open letters in his hand."

The Earl now entered to inform them that Lord Restormel wrote to request the company of them all at Green Hills that week, and Mr. Brightwen to say that he would be at Laurel Grove in two or three days. "Therefore," said he, "I shall tell Lord Restormel that our visit to him must be delayed."

Sophia however begged it might not, as she could receive her father; but as

Lady Helena made a point of her accompanying them to Green Hills, the Earl wrote as he at first intended.

Lord Restormel could not however be easy till he had come over in person, to ascertain the real causes of the delay, and to pay his compliments to the earl, from whom he met a reception equal to his most ardent wishes, while he saw in Lady Helena, whenever she conversed with him, a degree of lively effort, and happy emotion, and want of ease of manner, which made him hope that he was very far from being an object of indifference to her, and he was easily induced to prolong his visit till the next evening.

Mr. Brightwen in his letter to the earl, informed him that his late commercial speculation had totally failed, and that he had now forsworn all such speculations for ever: but that with part of the personal property which had devolved on him, he should purchase a large estate, and farm it himself; and that, said the earl laughing, he calls having forsworn speculation! But I

shall try to prevail on him to secure to you, Miss Brightwen, a sum of money which he cannot risk; and Sophia owned that for his sake such a step would be desirable. The meeting between the father and the daughter was an affecting one. They had last met beside the corpse of Sophia's sister. She had written to him, conjuring him to come without delay, or he might not see Louisa alive. But business still kept him away, and when he did arrive, all was over. This meeting, therefore, renewed for a short time the painful remembrance of the last; but present joy, with Mr. Brightwen at least, soon banished the recollection of past sorrow; and he had now still further good news to impart to Sophia. The gentleman who had bought his Norfolk estate had emulated, or rather exceeded him in thoughtless profusion and extravagance, and the estate being again on sale, Mr. Brightwen had bought it, and was then returning to the abode of his ancestors, and himself a much richer, and he hoped a wiser man than he was when he

lived there in splendour before; of the former assertion there could be no doubt, of the latter there was more than a little; but Sophia, on principle, looked on the bright side, and was delighted at the prospect of returning to dwell in those scenes endeared to her, even by mournful recollections. Her father had, however, the considerate delicacy to tell her, that if the idea of living at Rosewood was painful to her, for certain reasons, he would give up his purchase; but she assured him, that certain reasons made her wish still more to return thither, as she had not only she believed entirely conquered her attachment to the person, to whom he alluded, but was desirous of convincing herself and others that she had done so. Before they set off for Norfolk, whither Sophia chose to accompany her father, it was agreed that after a few days residence there, she should return to Laurel Grove, and accompany the family to Green Hills, and Lady Helena being curious to witness Sophia's return in opulence, to the abode which she had left in poverty, and to a neighbourhood where

she, as well as her father, had been so tenderly beloved, gladly acceded to their request that she would go with them.

" Do you remember Mr. Brightwen," said Lady Helena, " what Sterne says on being, as he assures us, at Rennes when the Marquis d'E— reclaimed his sword?"

" Not exactly."

" It was an incident of good fortune which will never happen to any traveller but a sentimental one, that I should be at Rennes at the very time of this requisition! And I shall insert in my life, when I write it, that it was an incident of good fortune which could only happen to a sentimental traveller. Miss Brightwen knows what a sentimental traveller I am, and how choice in my choice of vehicles, that I should be with the Brightwens when being enriched, (not by trade I think, there the Marquis had the advantage of you Mr. Brightwen,) by an unexpected circumstance, they returned to resume possession of the abode of their ancestors! what a fine paragraph that will

make! I really think it would be worthy of a person of my notorious benevolence, when I have finished my written life, to shorten my natural life, that I may the sooner gratify and edify my fellow-creatures by the sight of the former."

"I cannot bear," cried the countess, "to hear you talk of shortening your life, Helena, even in joke."

"Nor I to hear any one joke on such a subject," observed Mr. Brightwen, shuddering as he spoke; "nor could any one whom the chances of life had even caused one moment to deliberate on the expediency of committing such an action."

Lady Helena was shocked and silenced, and looking at Sophia, she saw she was of the paleness of death, while she involuntarily drew near her father and grasped his hand in her's. He smiled affectionately, and instantly changed the conversation: yes, changed it to the improvements he meditated in Rosewood, and the experiments in agriculture which he intended to make.

Experiments, thought Sophia, as she

sighed deeply; to think that the man who had just owned how desperate past rashness of the same kind had made him should so little have profited by experience as to be meditating an equally dangerous course.

"That man is incorrigible," observed Lady Helena afterwards to her father; "and do you not see, papa, that he has acquired such a habit of looking to the future, that he is at times quite regardless of the present; he sits absorbed in reverie, and of nails he has left his poor fingers none. Mem. to put down in my common-place book that speculators have no nails, and that they never say what fine weather it is to-day, let us enjoy it, but 'I wonder whether it will be fine to-morrow.'"

When the day arrived on which the travellers were to set off for Rosewood, a very elegant carriage, with four post-horses, drove up to the door, which Mr. Brightwen had purchased for the occasion; and as he once more handed his daughter into a coach of her own, no unpleasing tear trembled in his

eyes. Lady Helena was the only one of the party who was inclined to talk; her companions naturally enough were disposed to silence and reverie, while the past and the future so completely absorbed them, that the present passed almost wholly unheeded. The sight of London was, however, equally welcomed by all three.—Lady Helena and Miss Brightwen knew that they should there have the happiness of passing a few hours with Julia and Captain Fortescue, and Mr. Brightwen had business to transact relative to his new possessions.

When her friends were announced, Julia flew with delighted eagerness to their arms; but the change in her appearance alarmed them both, and they wondered either her father or her lover would allow her to continue her attendance on the former till it injured her health; but Julia assured them that her health was not at all impaired, and they both very soon discovered that her malady was of the mind rather than he body. Yet Fortescue was there—was an attentive

and evidently devoted lover! and Julia made no complaints, nor could Miss Brightwen directly or indirectly obtain from her any clue to the secret something which preyed on her damask cheek. Lady Helena and Sophia, therefore, left London again uneasy, but they could not tell why, while Fortescue persisted to assure them, that her ill looks were wholly caused, he was convinced, by anxiety concerning her father. "As to her coldness of manner towards me," added he, sighing deeply, "that I believe is owing wholly to the coldness of her nature, for though she does me the honor of saying that she loves me, their are times when, by her manner, I should think that her heart was closed against the admission of any feeling as glowing as that of love."

"This is strange! and very unlike the Julia we formerly knew!" said Lady Helena to Sophia.

"It is indeed!" she replied, "and something has occurred to occasion the change which Julia, from some mistaken

principle, conceals in her own bosom. In time, however, I hope she will be more communicative, but I, while I see her thus *deperir de jour en jour*, as the phrase is, I shall feel my own brightened prospects sadly overcast."

Poor Sir George insisted on seeing Lady Helena and Sophia for a short time, and Lady Villeroy had the mortification of hearing him declare that he was glad before he left the world to know that Miss Brightwen was at length as prosperous even in a worldly point of view, as her charms and her virtues deserved. As they left London very early, they reached Norfolk while it was yet light, and as their arrival was expected, they found most of the inhabitants of the village of Rosewood awaiting their approach. In spite of his lately acquired apathy, Mr. Brightwen's heart swelled almost to choking when he beheld the well-remembered scenes, and many a well-remembered face, while his eyes filled with tears, and his nod and bow of recognition were hurried and

embarrassed. Lady Helena soon caught the contagious emotion, and short sobs betrayed her sympathy with the feelings of her companions; but Sophia, on first reaching the village, clasped her hands expressively together; then hiding her face in her handkerchief, seemed employed for a few moments in prayer and thanksgiving.

"I never," wrote Lady Helena to Julia the next day, "beheld a countenance so radiant with a sort of holy satisfaction, or with such smiling benignity as our loved and revered Miss Brightwen's exhibited when she took the handkerchief from her face, and while in her sweetest tones she said—'Little did I ever think I should see this place and these poor people again, under such happy circumstances as the present! Oh! Lady Helena! my gratitude to the giver of all good is even overwhelming!' Her father did not speak, but he took her hand, and held it in his for some time, while the carriage at his desire went slowly through the village, and welcome, spoken and looked, met them

on every side, for the late possessor was deservedly unpopular, and Mr. Brightwen and Sophia had even been as deservedly beloved. As the carriage had nearly reached the park gates, we saw a gentleman in the dress of a clergyman, with a short, thick, dowdy-looking woman on his arm, stand up to make way for it, and Mr. Brightwen mutter between his closed teeth—'That scoundrel there!' while he turned round, and looked at Sophia, with an anxious enquiring, and particularly affectionate expression of countenance. It instantly occurred to me that this 'scoundrel,' as he called him, was Sophia's false and mercenary lover, the man who forsook her when fortune did the same, and married for money a woman he did not and could not love! 'Bravo!' said I to myself, 'here she is, returned splendid in fortune, scarcely impaired in beauty or in youth, and this odious man, with, no doubt, his ugly bargain on his arm, is here to witness her triumph, and feel his own punishment!' But how, I wonder, does

Sophia feel, and is she as heart-whole as she fancies herself? I instantly looked at her, and to my astonishment I heard her desiring the servant to tell the postilions to stop. Then, leaning out of the window, she said in her pretty manner to the reverend gentleman, who certainly looked very pale, and trembled from head, to foot! 'How are you Mr. Sumner? I hope all your family is well?' While the man bowed, stammered out something almost inaudible, and was too much thrown off his guard by her unexpected courtesy, and still more, perhaps, by her perfect composure of manner, so indicative of indifference, to remember to introduce dowdy Sumner his wife to her; but not one word of recognition, or one look but of disdain and aversion would Mr. Brightwen bestow on the man who had so basely deserted his child in her adversity; and I honored him for the parental feeling: however, on reflection, this feeling might not have been without a considerable alloy of selfish resentment, as his falsehood had

made Mr. Brightwen feel more acutely the injury he had himself done Sophia, as he by his extravagance had involved her in the poverty which deprived her of her lover. Be this as it may, I enjoyed and respected the gruff voice and haughty air with which papa Brightwen cried, 'Drive on postilions!' and obliged Sophia to give a parting bow to the unworthy object of her forgiving sweetness. 'Sophia! my dear! I am really quite astonished at you! What could you mean,' said Mr. Brightwen, 'by speaking to that fellow?' 'To prove to him and to myself that I have forgiven him; and also to shew him that he is now an object of such perfect indifference to me, that even the sight of him, after so many years absence and of suffering on his account, could not occasion any emotion in me; surely I was therefore right in doing what I did.' 'Perfectly so I think,' said I, 'and Mr. Brightwen when he considers how coolly and calmly you looked, and talked to the trembling, conscious wretch, will think so also.' 'Sophia!'

cried her father, 'I can only admire you—imitate you I cannot—and indeed I never can bear that fellow in my sight.' 'Oh, but you must, indeed!' replied she, 'my father must not resent even my injuries. It would be wicked as a Christian, it would be beneath him as a man.' 'Well put!' I observed, and unanswerable; 'and it would be making this person of too much consequence even to seem to remember what had passed. Depend on it his avaricious soul will be more punished and tortured by seeing you living in splendour at Rosewood, and Sophia in her unimpaired loveliness presiding there, while he is forced to drag the little dowdy about, for whose golden sake he gave up youthful love and happiness with it, than he could be by being forbidden your house.' 'I believe you are right, Lady Helena,' answered he after a pause, 'and the fellow shall visit us, that he may be tormented as he deserves to be.' Sophia shook her head at hearing such motives for admitting the man suggested, and followed; but she could not

utter what she thought, for we were now arrived at the house; and overcome with innumerable recollections and emotions she threw herself in an agony of feeling into the arms of her father, and he, though scarcely able to stand himself, lifted her out of the carriage, and laid her down on the first sofa he saw; after a pause of strong emotion he exclaimed—'How unchanged every thing appears in this room! (It was his library, and his own books, for every thing had been purchased as it stood) I declare that I can scarcely believe in the lapse of years, and could fancy that I had been dreaming ever since I saw these beloved objects last, and that we parted only last night! But what fine improvements I can make in this room! and in the park too! I am really impatient to begin!' He then, seeing Sophia was restored to composure, left the apartment to go over the house and speculate on those changes which he already meditated, and the conception of which had power to annihilate almost instantly, those honorable sensibili-

ties which, but a moment before, had endeared him to his daughter and me! The servants of the late possessor were still in the house, and we found every thing prepared for us, and in the most comfortable order. Sophia, therefore, proposed our retiring instantly to our apartments, and having put me in possession of mine, she begged me to excuse her for an hour or two, as she wanted to be alone; and when we met at a late dinner I saw that, though her countenance was then composed, her eyes were swelled with excessive weeping. The day after to-morrow I shall write again, dearest Julia, but for the present farewell! "H. F."

Lady Helena kept her promise, and wrote as follows:—

"Yesterday and to-day we have been visiting the poor, and the rich have been visiting us; but Mr. and Mrs. Sumner were not amongst them. I hope the man is too self-judged to volunteer the visit. The visits from the rich were very uninteresting; those to the poor delightful. I

may call them, many of them, Sophia's poor; for it is the very young alone who know her not, either by her bounties or her instructions, and they were so delighted to see her again! What an admirable wife for a parish priest she would have been! The man was a fool as well as a knave, my dear. I conclude, you knew that this Sumner was waiting for orders when Sophia and he first met, and that he has the living of this place; all things considered, I believe, he does his duty well, and is so eloquent and popular a preacher, that whenever a charity or other particular sermon is to be preached in the city, near this place, he is the bespoken preacher. Of his wife's merits we have heard but little. The cottagers are not much acquainted with them; they say they know her to see to —— but she is a poor sickly body, and has had a large family, and lie a good deal in bed.—A charming description! I fear my vindictive feelings against the husband were gratified by it. But let me describe him to you for Sophia's sake; I

know you will be glad to hear, that only of the man has she reason to be ashamed. His person is tall and manly, but his face is not handsome enough to make one suspect that our friend was captivated by exterior only; he is sallow, a little marked by the small pox; has good teeth, and an intelligent countenance; his greatest charm to me is his voice, that is sweet and clear, and I should call it insinuating; a voice full of inflections, and I dare say a most dangerous engine in the power of an artful man. No wonder, innocent unsuspecting sixteen as Sophia then was, could not withstand it, especially as it breathed forth no mean poetical effusions of the owner's brain, said, not sung I mean. So much for exteriors, if I may call a voice an exterior, and you will wonder how I can know so much of them—I will tell you: yesterday was Sunday, and we went to the parish church, that is Sophia and I, not her father; he declared it would make him abjure Christianity to hear that fellow preach it, and that his prayers would turn to curses on his lips.

'Then stay at home, good man; no, naughty man,' said I, 'and we will pray to your Maker to turn your heart.' 'Dearest father, for your own sake, forgive!' said Sophia. 'Well, well, in time, perhaps, I will.' 'I was very curious,' said she, as we returned home, 'to hear Mr. Sumner preach, I had heard so much of his powers, and I remember how very ambitious he always was to be what is called a fine preacher. 'And is he one,' said I, 'in your estimation?' 'He is exactly what the world calls so, and what the earthly ambition to be so, which he always expressed would make him.' 'But I suspect you are not satisfied with his preaching?' 'Oh, no, there is no teaching of the Spirit there; no unction; no preaching from the heart, it is all of the head; the action is graceful, but studied; the hand and arm are not raised involuntarily, and from an involuntary impulse as it were, but they rise because they are bidden, and I fear the inquisitive eye looks round to discover, not contrition, but admiration.' Julia, this woman is quite cured;

no remains of first love here. 'How just,' said I, 'is all you have observed: I did not like to give my own opinion, because I thought you might be mortified.' 'Why so?' 'Because it was natural that, in order to excuse your attachment to this man, you should wish him to appear a superior person in my eyes, and those of others.' 'No,' she replied, calmly smiling, 'I feel that at the time my attachment took place it was quite excusable; he had been to college, had distinguished himself there; had a heart apparently full of love, and a head full of learning and poetry: the charm of his voice I need not describe, you own you feel it. His manner I then thought charming, but now it appears to me artificial.' 'Oh, very,' said I. 'My father blames him,' she added, 'too severely; I can make great allowances for him. When my fortune was wholly lost, we could not expect to marry for many, many years. This living was filled by a young man, and Mr. Sumner had nothing; to be sure he needed not to have married another

woman directly.' 'And such a woman too!' 'But I must own,' she replied, 'that his falsehood pained me less on that account, as I was sure that he did not marry from love, but avarice; and though my sense of right was shocked, my self-love was gratified.' 'Natural, but wrong.' 'I grant it, and bitterly have I reproached myself for the unworthy feeling; however, I had lost him, whatever were his motives for marrying, and I was miserable; but why dwell on past misery? I think you will own that I am heart-whole now.' 'I do own it, and I think he must be convinced of it also, spite of his vanity.'"

The day after Lady Helena wrote thus:

"As we were walking this morning, most sudden and violent rain came on, and we had no umbrellas, nor was any house, save one, near us. 'Let us ask shelter at that house,' said I, 'who lives there?' 'Mr. Sumner,' replied Sophia.' 'Pshaw! then I had rather be wet,' cried I, peevishly. 'As you please, and this tree will shelter us, if not, here is a barn open.' In the

barn we found a nurse-maid, with a baby in her arms, and other children of different ages taking shelter also. You know, my love, I am very fond of babies. I was instantly devouring the fat, fubby, beautiful one before me! and dancing it in my arms, while Sophia was caressing and talking to the others; but really I thought I should have dropped the little love with loathing, when I heard the nurse say to my companion, 'They are Mrs. Sumner's children, madam.' I am afraid I did pinch the poor thing involuntarily, for it began to squall, and I was glad to get rid of it. Not so Sophia, she continued to smile on the bonny bairns most benignly, and even hoped Mr. and Mrs. Sumner were well. At this moment we heard a quick step, and a gentleman throwing open the door exclaimed, 'So here you are! I was afraid you would be wet, and therefore came to meet you with umbrellas, my dears!' It was Mr. Sumner. He started at seeing us, and betrayed such excessive emotion, that I could not but suspect he was not as heart-

whole as Sophia, and when I recollected his wife, I, even I pitied him. But Sophia was as composed as I was, and was able to compliment the poor man on his promising children; on which, (it is a fact, Julia,) I saw him turn away, with tears in his eyes! 'Well, now behold us leaving the barn, Sophia and I arm in arm, and Mr. Sumner carrying an umbrella over our heads.' For him not to offer us the shelter of his house would have been affectation, and for Sophia to refuse it; so behold us next seated by Mr. Sumner's fire-side, the lady in dishabille, and not in good humour, evidently displeased at having such visitors forced on her, and, I suspect, not a little jealous of Sophia, from whose sweet face poor Mr. Sumner, (see how rapidly I have promoted him! first the man, then the poor man, and now poor Mr. Sumner; he will be poor, 'dear Mr. Sumner next, I suppose;') where was I? Oh! from whose sweet face poor Mr. Sumner could, I saw, with difficulty remove his eyes. But, Sophia, I am sure, was wholly unconscious of it, and be-

lieved that he was as indifferent as herself. It is a very true saying, though often used by the profane in mockery, that "to the pure, all things are pure;" and so the said Sumner to Sophia Brightwen, but not to Helena Fortescue. 'Ergo!' 'None of your ergos, if you please, Julia, but let me go on.' Well, Mr. Sumner ordered sandwiches and wine, and Mrs. Sumner looked disordered thereat, as if she said, 'I shall never get rid of them, if they get to eating and drinking;' however, we could not stay for the eatables, for the man was forced to come to mistress for the key of the wine, and I heard the lad whisper something about stale bread: while we did stay, and that was merely owing to the pressing entreaties of the husband, for the wife did not press us at all. We tried to converse, when, lo! Mrs. Sumner found her tongue, and looking at Sophia with an expression of countenance which I cannot describe, after having, I thought, with an envious eye, surveyed the elegant mourning which Sophia wore, formed a striking con-

trast with her own rusty black, she said in a sort of spiteful falsetto—'Pray, Miss Brightwen, was not the last place you lived in Lady Villeroy's family? I think you were governess, or something there.' 'I was, madam,' coldly replied Sophia, colouring a little, while a deep indignant blush suffused my cheek, and shame (perhaps indignation also,) that of her husband! But, I suppose you were governess to this young lady last, Miss Liddy something, I think you called her; but you did not introduce us, nor Mr. Sumner neither, though he piques himself so much on his breeding, and I am told it is very ungenteel not to name folks to each other.' 'My dear,' said the poor man, looking as if he wished to say my plague, 'Miss Brightwen did not do me the honour to name her friend to me.' 'I am ashamed of the omission,' said Sophia; 'allow me now then to present you to Lady Helena Fortescue.' Oh! that you could but have seen her countenance, when she found out the supposed Miss Liddy something was a Lady Helena!

and the awkwardness with which she wriggled on her seat, and drawled out, 'I beg pardon, I am sure for what I said;' but the poor man looked ready to faint, not at finding out my rank, but at its effect on his wife, and the contrast between her insolence to Sophia, and her servile awe of me. She now, then, was quite sure Sophia had been my governess, and on her she had not yet vented all her spite. 'I suppose then, my lady, Miss Sophia is your governess.' 'No madam, I cannot boast of the honor of having had Miss Brightwen for my governess.' 'Honor, la!' 'Yes madam, honor and advantage too:--had she been so, I should have been a much better and wiser person than I am.' 'Dear me!' cried Mrs. Sumner, in a voice of incredulity. 'Yes, you may well cry dear me,' said Sophia; 'but Lady Helena is apt to depreciate herself and exalt her friends.' 'You know Miss Brightwen that I speak the truth, and that I am more in awe of your reproaching eye than of any thing in the world.' 'Well, really,' said Mrs. Sumner

tittering, 'this is so odd! but pray, my lady, if not your governess, what was Miss Sophy to you?' 'A friend and companion whom I equally love and reverence.' 'Aye, companion! I thought she was in some situation in the family.' I was beginning, 'I tell you madam,' when the literal Sophia interrupted me with one of her looks, and said, 'I will tell Mrs. Sumner the truth myself: when Lady Villeroy wanted my services no longer, Lord and Lady Erpingham and Lady Helena, kindly wished me to live with them, to read with Lady Helena, and make myself otherwise useful.' 'And this you call telling the truth, cried I, indignantly. No, Mrs. Sumner, no, all we required was, that she should be agreeable, not useful, and give us her company, not her services as she terms it. "Law! a cheap way of earning her living indeed. I wish any one would pay me for my company, and I am sure they should have it: pray what salary were you to have Miss Sophia?' 'The word money or salary was never mentioned between us, madam,'

said I, 'and now Miss Brightwen need no longer to be in any family in a situation which, in the eyes of the vulgar, may seem to degrade her, but which she has always exalted and made in the highest degree respectable. Miss Brightwen is now staying with us, and will, I hope, stay some time. 'Yes, she is rich now, they say.' 'But was she pennyless, we should covet her society, and respect her just the same. The loss of wealth, in the eyes of those capable of appreciating her worth, never could have deprived her of her value and her claims to respect; and the acquisition of fortune adds not one tittle to the esteem and respectful admiration which Lord and Lady Erpingham and myself have always felt for her ever since we beheld her, and have even been proud to testify to others.' You know me (and my manner, Julia, when my moral feelings are offended), and you may suppose that it had its full effect here. The wife was mortified, but *awed;* the husband struck to the heart, for conscience pushed the dart home, and he looked,

while a deep sigh issued from his bosom, as if he said to himself, 'And this was the creature I forsook!' And there sat the creature he married! I thought of the two pictures in Hamlet, and I had leisure to think, for my long speech frightened every one into silence; nay, Sophia was silly enough to shed a tear. I then, having done my beloved friend justice, and revenged her on her enemies, rose up majestically, and said as the rain was over, we would intrude on them no longer; no, not even to eat what, I dare say, was only a mutton sandwich after all, and which at last made its appearance. Sophia now approached Mrs. Sumner, and would have taken her hand, but she contrived to withhold it from her. 'I hope,' said she, 'that we shall see you and Mr. Sumner at Rosewood before we leave it?' 'Why, really, I am no great visitor, so I can't say.' 'Oh, certainly, certainly, we will have the honour to wait on Mr. B. and you,' cried the husband, with a flushed cheek and faltering voice, for which I gave him credit,

whatever his wife did ; but I was not so satisfied with his evident endeavour now to catch the eye of Sophia, while his own had an expression full of former days, which he wished her to see. It was in vain, she did not look at him but with her usual grace and courtesy. She took leave of the children and the mother. One of the little ones, who had never stirred from Sophia's side, now put up her mouth to kiss her, and said, 'Don't to it.' 'Come away, and don't be troublesome,' cried Mrs. Sumner, 'that child is so fond of all strangers!' 'Will you kiss me,' said I, to the child? 'No,' hanging back, and clinging to Sophia. 'The child, then, has her favorites, I see, notwithstanding,' observed I, maliciously I own; then added, 'perhaps you would like to go with the lady?' 'Ies.' 'And not with me?' 'No, I sank you.' 'Come here when I bid you!' cried the angry mother; but the child ran to its papa, who snatched her up in his arms, and kissed her more warmly than I approved, as it seemed to be in conse-

quence of her fondness for Sophia. I felt it was time we were away, and Sophia was as silent as myself for some way on our road home. At length she said, 'Did I do right, Lady Helena, in asking them to Rosewood?' 'You could not do otherwise. It would have looked as if you were withheld by a certain consciousness.' 'So I thought; yet it is very sure that poor Mrs. Sumner does not like me, because she is jealous of her husband's having once been my lover. Yet, how absurd this is.' I did not agree with her, but I would not make her uneasy by saying so, therefore I said nothing. Sophia, when she resides here, will find out that Mrs. Sumner has some reason to be jealous, and then her sense of right will teach her what is proper to be done. What a long letter! I wish you would write to me hither as soon as you receive it, and tell me how you are. Your pale, pensive face haunts us; we are sure all is not right with you, and yet we know not what it is that is wrong! Shall we never know, though we love you so dearly?

Unkind Julia! but no, your silence can only proceed from mistaken kindness, as you are a kind, good creature, and the beloved friend,

of your ever devoted,

H. F.

END OF VOL. II.

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